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[ALMA LAID HER HEAD ON KEN'S BREAST IN A FIT OF GIRLISH SHYNESS!]

TWO MISS DANES.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was great amazement at the Chestnuts when Kenneth related his wonderful story. Mrs. Menteith was not, perhaps, so surprised as the girls, since she had always known her first husband was Sir Geoffrey's only brother; but even she had never suspected the Baronet had no male heir of his own. As to Mary and Georgie, when Ken came up on the Sunday afternoon after the funeral, and told them his news, their feelings were delight and indignation pretty generally mingled. They rejoiced that a share of worldly prosperity should have come to their brother. But they thought it a shame that such a woman as he described Honor Dane should exist at all, much less as an heiress.

"Of course you will leave the office and settle down as a country gentleman," exclaimed Georgie. "Ken, I am so glad. It was simply horrible that we should all be rich, while you toiled hard from morning to night,

and now you are Sir Kenneth Dane, of Woodlaks. It sounds beautiful!"

Ken laughed heartily. He really could not help it. Georgie's delight was so naive and outspoken. Mary's congratulations were quieter. She was just as pleased as her sister; but she had had a love dream of her own, which had been roughly dispelled, and perhaps it made her understand her brother, and fancy there was a drawback to his good fortune in that. If it had come a month sooner it might have kept Alma faithful.

Kenneth read the feeling in her eyes, and the first time they were alone together, he said, simply,—

"You are not to worry over my disappointment, Molly."

"Don't you worry over it yourself. Oh, Ken, don't you wish this had come sooner?"

"No, Molly; even now I am comparatively a poor man, and she (he never willingly spoke Alma's name) wanted wealth. It is better that we should have parted than that I should have married her and blighted her life, poor little thing!"

Mary dropped the subject. She was not at

all spiteful, but she felt she could find nothing agreeable to say of Alma Bertram, so she plunged into another topic.

"I should like to do something for Miss Dane, Ken," she began, timidly, "wouldn't you?"

"Which of them," demanded Sir Kenneth, smiling, "the heiress or her aunt?"

"Ken, you are too provoking! Of course I meant May. Mother says she would ask her here, Ken, if you thought she was not a very grand young lady."

"She struck me as more like a broken-hearted child," said Ken, frankly. "I wish mother would have her here and cheer her up. She has lost everything, poor girl; father, lover, home, and fortune. She is actually penniless."

Mrs. Menteith might be a weak woman, but she was certainly a kind one. Three days after her father's funeral May Dane received a letter from her, begging as a favour that her unknown niece would come to Champion Hill on a long visit. Mrs. Menteith touched very lightly on May's troubles. She seemed to fear a stranger's sympathy might be intrusive. She wrote that she could never forget how her lost

husband had loved his brother Geoffrey, and that she should be delighted to welcome the latter's child on a visit long or short, as best suited her.

"I am sure, from my son's report," concluded the widow, "you cannot be at rest so near your old home. If you decide, after all, to live with Mr. and Mrs. Clive, you ought at least to have a change after all your sad experience; so come to us and let me try to make you feel at home."

May put this letter into Mrs. Clive's hands.

"What shall I do?"

"My dear," said the Rector's wife, simply, when she had read Mrs. Menteith's invitation, "I would gladly keep you here; but I think you will be sorely tried if you are within reach of the Croft during the next few weeks. I am sure your aunt will be kind to you. I think it is a pity to refuse her invitation, especially as her son is the head of your family."

May smiled rather bitterly.

"Honor Dane is that! But do you know, Mrs. Clive, I think I should like to go. It would be torture to me to hear every day of some fresh change my niece was making in the dear old home. Besides, I mean to earn my own living; and London will be the best place in the world to hear of something I can do."

Mrs. Clive smiled.

"I don't think Mrs. Menteith will approve of that," she said, simply; "but though the Rector and I shall be sorry to lose you even for a time, May, I think you are right to go!"

An early day was fixed, and May left Little Otterley Rectory to enter, as it were, a new world.

She wondered as the train bore her swiftly towards Victoria, whether the Menteiths would try to like her, or whether they had asked her as a matter of charity to a "poor relation."

It was the first time in her life she had travelled without a maid. The first journey she had ever taken without her father.

She longed yet dreaded for it to be over. She knew Sir Kenneth did not live at the Chestnuts; but she hoped, at least, he might be there when she arrived. It would seem less strange, and he would help her to get over what she most dreaded, the meeting with the girls.

May knew very little of young girls in general, and her recent experience of Honor Dane had not impressed her favourably with the species. She knew the Misses Menteith were both rich, and one of them a colossal heiress.

She almost feared their mother had sent the invitation from tender recollections of her first marriage and the husband of her youth, while the two girls, who had nothing in common with the Dane family, might not unnaturally resent having a stranger forced suddenly on them.

May reached Victoria, whence her journey was thus far over; but dreading the last stage of it.

She did not expect to be met. A "poor relation" must not be exacting, but for all that it was an intense comfort to her to see Kenneth's face as the train glided into the terminus, and to hear his kindly greeting as he opened the carriage door, and welcomed her to London.

"I am so glad you have come. My mother would have met you herself, only we both fancied as I had seen you before you might prefer a familiar face. The girls are looking forward to your visit very much."

May raised her beautiful eyes to his with a strange questioning expression.

"Do you know I have been so afraid that they might not like your mother having asked me!"

Kenneth laughed.

"You misjudge them," he answered, frankly. "It is would not pain you I should like to tell you Georgie's indignation at your niece's conduct. And now, before we reach the Chestnuts, there are one or two things I want to ask you."

"But he was so long in asking them that the cab had crossed Vauxhall Bridge before he began."

"Have you seen Mrs. Dane since I left the Rectory?"

"No. I think she is very kindly disposed towards me, but she is most likely entirely under her daughter's influence."

Very briefly Kenneth told his cousin of his strange interview with Mrs. Dane after the funeral, and her frantic assertion that if Honor remained at The Croft a curse would fall on her.

"I should not trouble you with this," went on Kenneth, in a perplexed tone, "only I am certain poor Mrs. Dane believed just what she said. Now, she did not strike me as a romantic or a superstitious woman. I have thought over the incident several times, and every day I become more convinced that she really believed just what she said. Now, only two things could make her believe this. Either she is utterly superstitious, and her nerves have been worked on by some one who, from devotion to you, grudges Honor her inheritance, or—"

May interrupted him.

"I am certain, Sir Kenneth, it is not the first. No one, however much they cared for me, would try to work upon Mrs. Dane's fears. Besides, papa and I led such a secluded life. I don't believe in all the world I have an intimate friend except the Clives, and then we never complained of Honor's being the heiress. We knew it was just and legal. No, I cannot agree with your first supposition."

"Perhaps you will believe the second. If no one has worked on Mrs. Dane, then I think she knows of some flaw in her daughter's claim to Dancroft. She dreads, if Honor enjoys what should be yours, that the vengeance promised to those who rob the fatherless, will fall on her child. I shall never mention this at the Chestnuts, but I made up my mind to ask you if there could be any truth in the idea."

May shook her head.

"It is strange, but it struck me too. Though I only saw her that once, and I was so upset then I could hardly reason, yet just that fancy came to me. Mrs. Dane looked worried, almost frightened. There was something deprecating in her manner as though she felt in a false position."

"And would it not be possible?"

"No," replied the girl, firmly; "my dear father so lamented over his property passing to Honor that if there had been a flaw in her claims he must have discovered it; besides, Sir Kenneth, what flaw could there be? John was my father's eldest son. Even if my own baby brother had lived he would have had no right to the property if John left a child!"

"And I suppose this Honor is John's child?"

May looked bewildered.

"Of course she is."

"Pardon me. We will never revert to the subject again if it distresses you; but this once we had better go into it thoroughly. Mrs. John Dane and your father were estranged. From the time of his son's death Sir Geoffrey never saw or corresponded with the widow. If the real Honor died of some childish malady, what would there be to hinder the mother from substituting some other child for her lost daughter?"

"It is not that!"

"It might be."

"I think not. A nameless instinct tells me it is not that, Sir Kenneth. I can't explain it to you; but I feel that Nancy Dane would not have the brain and cunning to originate a plot. Besides, what object could she have? Her own income is five-and-twenty thousand a year, seven coming from her dowry, the rest left her by her husband. With such a fortune she could not plot and scheme to gain my father's property. Besides, Honor is strikingly like a picture of my brother John, which hangs in the gallery at the Croft."

"Then how do you explain Mrs. Dane's

evident uneasiness. Her longing (it really amounts almost to that) to do something to make amends to you?"

"I can't explain it. She may be naturally a very kind-hearted woman who cannot bear to think of an orphan girl homeless and destitute."

"It is more than that."

"Then, Sir Kenneth, we must leave it to time. I expect nothing. I hope for nothing. Honor Dane is mistress of my old home. She has dismissed every servant who had served us faithfully. She already talks of changes and improvements. I feel, when I think of it, as though it would drive me mad. I believe I accepted Mrs. Menteith's invitation chiefly because I could not bear to stay so near the home from which I am now an outcast!"

"I promise you I will never mention this subject again," said Kenneth. "I only spoke of it to-day because it seemed almost a duty to tell you my doubts."

"You are very kind, Sir Kenneth, I often wish you had known my father."

"I wish it too. Don't you think," he asked, in a more cheerful tone, "that as we are first cousins, and I am fourteen years older than you, you might drop my title and let me call you May?"

"I would rather," said the girl, simply, "it will make me feel more as if I had one relation left, and I can't bear to hear myself called Miss Dane. It always seems to mean Honor."

The cab was driving up the avenue of Chestnuts, which led to Mrs. Menteith's house. The size and grandeur of the abode struck May as unusual in a London suburb.

She had not quite gathered how vast was the wealth which the late merchant had amassed. She trembled a little as Kenneth led her into the broad hall; but the first glance at his mother's face reassured her. Beatrice Menteith welcomed her so kindly that May felt thankful she had come.

Mrs. Menteith looked what she was—a gentle, sweet-tempered woman, whose heart was larger than her head.

She drew May into a pretty, cosy little sitting-room, where tea was waiting, and introduced her to the girls.

"Mary is my right hand, and Georgie is our youngest," the mother said, cheerfully; "but I think she is two years older than you."

"We are so glad to see you," said Miss Menteith, pleasantly. "You know we have no near relations, and you will be just like a cousin."

"I should like to be," said May, with her sweet smile, which quite subjugated Georgie's heart; and tea having been discussed, she proposed to show May her own room.

"Mother's maid will wait on you," she said, as she threw open the door of a bright, cheerful-looking bedroom. "You must ring whenever you want her, for she really has very little to do. Molly and I are a great trial to her, because we prefer to dress ourselves, and she will like someone to tyrannise over."

"But I mean to do everything for myself now," said May. "I want to learn to be useful by the time Mrs. Menteith finds me a situation."

Georgie had the good taste not to protest. She only said, frankly,—

"You are not to talk of situations for ages. I hope you will like Champion-hill. We generally go away in August, but mother was at the seaside all the spring, and so this year she wants to stay at home till October."

"It looks a pretty place. Have you lived here long?"

"I was born here. Yes, it is pretty, but it is too big for us now. Three lonely women don't want a huge house like this."

"But I suppose your brother is here often?"

"He may be here often now," said Georgie, frankly. "But until a month ago, all his leisure time had other claims. I

should like just to tell you, and then you'll understand if Ken seems gloomy or morose. He had been engaged two years, and they were to have been married in September. Now that it's all over, he feels it."

"Did she die?"

"Oh, dear no. She discovered Ken was not rich enough for her. Papa didn't leave him a legacy, and he was too proud to accept an allowance from mother."

May's indignation was written on her face as she asked,—

"Then she jilted him?"

"Yes. She was his landlady's niece. She hadn't a penny of her own, and her aunt couldn't live without taking lodgers; but, yet, Ken was not grand enough for her. I feel so angry!"

"Did you know her? Was she pretty?"

"She was just like a wax doll. He brought her here sometimes, and mother petted her, but Molly and I never took to her. She seemed always acting a part."

"Poor Sir Kenneth! I am so sorry."

"Her name was Alma. Please never mention it, only we thought you'd better know. Mother frets over it, and declares Ken will never get over it; but I think it is better far for him to find out what she was before he married her. Ken is such a good fellow, and he just worshipped Alma. It was hard lines for him."

"And does he go on living there, with her aunt?"

"Yes. Alma went off somewhere on a long visit, and it was understood he should move before she returned. She will be frantic when she hears she has lost the chance of becoming Lady Dane. I beg your pardon," she said, suddenly, recollecting who had last worn that title, "I ought not to have said that. I forgot it must have a painful sound to you."

"But, indeed, it has not," said May, quickly. "My mother died when I was born, and I never heard anyone speak of her as 'Lady Dane.' I will confess one thing, though, I am very glad your brother is not called after his uncle, I do not think I could bear to hear of another Sir Geoffrey, yet!"

Georgie squeezed her hand affectionately.

"Ken was called after an Australian sailing ship, where his father met mamma. It sounds romantic, doesn't it?"

"Very," said May, with a smile; "but it is a pretty name, and an old one, since it dates back to the Crusades."

"I told Alma so one day, and she assured me it was not mentioned in 'Mangnall's Questions,' which had formed the staple of her education. Poor Alma! I wonder if she has heard how things have changed for Kenneth."

"Don't you think the engagement might be renewed," suggested May, hopefully.

"No. You see, she showed him so plainly she wanted money. Is Woodlake a nice place?"

"It is very pretty. I have seen pictures of it."

"Well, perhaps Ken will invite us all to stay with him some day. He and Molly are both householders now and mamma and I are left homeless."

The days passed on, and May began to feel more at home at the Chessnute than she could have thought possible. Mrs. Menteith petted her in gentle motherly fashion.

May was always trying to make life pleasant for her and Georgie, perhaps, did her the truest service of all in making her feel she was really of use by confiding all her schemes to her, and asking her opinion.

"You know, I always wanted to make something of my life," Georgie said, rather disconsolately, when May had been with them a month; "but papa was so much against it I waited till I was of age, then came his illness, and I have only just begun to think of my plans again."

"But what do you want to do, Georgie?"

"I don't know," confessed the youngest Miss Menteith; "but I want to be of some use

in the world. I am afraid it is too late for me to study for a doctor, and I have no gift for speaking in public, so I can't be a female preacher or lecturer. Mother sighs when I talk of becoming a hospital nurse; and, in fact, I can't quite see what to be!"

"Why not stay at home," suggested May. "It seems to me you are very happy here!"

Georgie shook her head.

"I want to strike out a line for myself," she said, decidedly. "Papa knew I should never be content to be an idle young lady, that is why he left me such a small sum."

"I always thought you and Mary were equal in fortune, except that she owned the house."

"Oh, dear no! Molly has ten thousand a year—fifteen, if anything happened to mother; but I have only two hundred and fifty, unless I marry, when Molly is to make me an allowance. She fretted dreadfully over it at first. She thought I should fancy it was her fault; but I understood it. Papa always thought me eccentric, and he didn't want his money used for odd things, that is why he only left me just enough to live on."

"But—"

Georgie interrupted her.

"And do you know I'm very glad. It seems as though papa knew I couldn't be happy just as a fashionable young lady, and left me free to choose out a path for myself. Only I can't make up my mind what. You see, I can't go on living here with my hands folded."

"I don't think you often fold them, Georgie," said May, with a smile. "You are always busy about something."

"It is pleasant here now," confessed Georgie, with a sigh; "but after a few months, when we are no longer in deep mourning, we shall have to go out more, and people will point us out as the daughters of poor Menteith, the Merchant Prince; and men will inquire into our fortunes, and wonder if there is money enough to gild over our lack of birth, and I won't have it, May. We are an unlucky family where marriage comes in, and I don't want either to break my heart for someone who doesn't care for me, or to marry a man who takes me just for the sake of whatever Molly settles on me, so I shall go away!"

"Why do you say you are an unlucky family?" demanded May.

"Only where marriage comes in. Molly lost her heart seven years ago to one of the nicest men in the world; but my father thought him too poor, and sent him away. Mary was never the same afterwards, she seemed somehow to get quiet and grave suddenly, and she has kept so ever since. Well, of course, you call her unlucky, and as for Ken, whenever I look at him I hate Alma, just because she has blighted his life!"

"I don't think Kenneth is broken-hearted," persisted May, but Georgie preferred her own opinion, perhaps because it confirmed her theory that the love affairs of her brother and sister having proved such a signal failure, it really behoved her to forsake the world before she engaged in a romance on her own account.

CHAPTER XII.

A MAN is never so likely to fall in love as when after one girl has revolted all his feelings he meets another her exact opposite.

Report, Lord Tracey, had been urged by his friends to choose a wealthy wife, and Honor Dane had been specially recommended to his notice.

He had dutifully sought the young lady's society for nearly six weeks without feeling one thrill of genuine attraction towards her. Finally her heartlessness so outraged his better self that he left her, vowing secretly never to seek her again, and that very day he fell hopelessly in love with a girl who had not a penny of fortune, and was, besides, very far his inferior in the social scale.

If only he had met Alma Bertram under

any other circumstances he might have understood her better; but coming on her when his whole mind was indignant at Honor's mercenary self-will, she seemed to him a street-faced, gentle creature whom his ardent fancy speedily converted into a veritable angel.

He met Miss Bertram often after that first encounter. Sometimes by accident, oftener by design—he seemed always crossing her path.

Then, when he discovered that Dr. Carleton was fond of scientific pursuits, and possessed a small laboratory, the country practitioner and the young nobleman struck up a great intimacy.

Rupert became a frequent visitor at Rose Villa, and only the gentle mistress of the house regretted the attachment evidently springing up between him and Alma.

Rupert was just the nature to love ardently when he loved at all. The very fact that he had never frittered his heart away in idle counterfeits of the passion made it the more intense; while his reverence and high ideal of women gave to his affection something almost of worship, and Mrs. Carleton, looking on, regretted the pretty girl he so adored was not more worthy of such love.

Now and again Lord Tracey pulled himself up sharply, and asked his conscience what could possibly come of his new desires. The very few friends who had urged him to marry Miss Dane would condemn matrimony as his ruin if Alma were the bride.

Choosing a penniless wife meant giving up the very last chance of freeing his estates and clearing off the burden of debt which well nigh weighed him down.

If he married Alma he would have to let the mortgagees foreclose, and—save for an empty title—his position would be very much the same as it had been before so many unexpected deaths made him Lord Tracey and the head of the family.

All he could depend on was his mother's fortune of three hundred a year, and what he might earn by his pen. He wrote occasionally for several papers, and though as yet he had not gained much for his articles, their value was gradually increasing. He might live abroad, and send a Paris letter to some London newspaper; or—and he liked this scheme best—he might find some quaint old-fashioned house in a beautiful English village, and, blessed with Alma's sweet face to make his sunshine, try to achieve some more enduring work—a novel that should make him famous.

Poor fellow! He was ready to give up all the world for Alma. He believed her beautiful, unselfish, true. Little did he guess that she had only just parted from a lover as devoted as himself, from worldly motives; and that in her own way she was quite as mercenary as Honor Dane.

While Miss Dane herself wondered, rather impatiently, why Lord Tracey did not avail himself of her invitation to the Croft; while gentle Mrs. Carleton expected every day that "Mr. Tracey" would speak out; while Alma herself marvelled whether his intentions were "serious," poor Rupert tortured himself with the question whether he had any chance with this dear little girl, whose childish smile and innocent wiles had made such dire havoc with his heart.

And the crisis was brought about by a most prosaic individual, one who had never heard of Lord Tracey's existence, and who would have been the last person in the world to help Alma to another lover, since she had not forgiven her yet for jilting the first; in a word, old Mrs. Bertram, the humble lodging-house keeper, of Fountain-road, was the final cause of hurrying on Rupert's proposal.

Mrs. Bertram, in common with the rest of his acquaintances, heard of Kenneth Dane's strange change of fortune, but she did not write the news to Alma until it suited her. An astute woman, she fancied the beauty was quite capable of trying to win back Sir Kenneth to his allegiance, and the sensible aunt would not let her have the chance.

Not till the young Baronet had finally left her roof and gone down to settle at Woodlake did Mrs. Bertram inform Alma of his prospects. She wrote pretty sharply then, reproving the girl for her past fickleness, and hinting pretty plainly that since she had lost the best chance of a husband she must try to become a more useful member of the household when she returned to Fountain-road.

"You have been away nearly two months," concluded the widow, "and I am sure it is time you came home. I have let Mr. Dane's rooms (or rather Sir Kenneth's) to a widow lady with one little girl. Mrs. Hargrave seems a nice person, and is willing to pay you a trifle weekly if you teach the child French and music. Altogether it may prove a very suitable opening for you, and I want you to come home at once."

What floods of tears Alma shed over that letter. She might have been Lady Dane, with a beautiful estate and a thousand a year; Kenneth's honours had been rather magnified by Mrs. Bertram, and by her own folly she had lost the chance.

It would be very different at Fountain-road with a lady and child in the house. They would want more attention. The best parlour would no longer be free all day for Alma. Besides, the lessons in French and music (Alma hated teaching) her aunt seemed to hint at other duties that would be required.

Alma tore the letter into shreds, and thought herself the most unfortunate girl in the world. She went into Brighton that morning to do some errands for Mrs. Carleton.

The girls thought it very good-natured of her to volunteer on such a baking August day, when they both wished particularly to be at home. They little guessed the reason of Alma's offer. That she hoped to meet Mr. Tracey, and perhaps lead him on to the proposal she believed was hovering on his lips.

Was it a coincidence? Had Rupert's good angel deserted him? Was it ill-luck, pure and simple, that brought him on the cliffs that morning just as Alma was sauntering towards Rottingdean? The little start of shyness she gave on recognizing him was a perfect piece of acting, though he believed it to be genuine astonishment.

"I am so glad I met you," she said, with her sweetest smile. "I wanted to say good-bye; I am going home to-morrow!"

Strange that, though he had known from the first she was only visiting the Carletons, yet this announcement took Rupert by surprise. He had never cast a thought to the time when her visit must come to an end.

"It's very sudden, isn't it, Miss Bertram?" "I have been away nearly two months, and aunt says she can't do without me any longer. I'm sure it seems more like two weeks. I suppose because I have been so happy!"

"What do the Carletons say?"

"Oh! they are very kind; but—you know I don't belong to them. I only came on a visit, and it has been a good long one."

"Alma!" said Rupert suddenly, "your aunt must learn to do without you, for I want you, dear! Will you be my dear little wife instead of Mrs. Bertram's adopted child?"

He looked into her eyes with deep passion shining in his own. It was a very different wooing from Kenneth Dane's; but Alma had no fault to find with it. She let him take her hand and draw her close to himself, and then she laid her head on his breast in a fit of girlish shyness, the loneliness of the spot making their privacy as certain as though they had been in some empty house.

"I am only a poor man, darling," said Lord Tracey, when he came down to earth and such practical thoughts as money; "but I will work as I never did before, for your dear sake."

Alma felt sorry at the first part of his speech, but consoled herself by reflecting that poverty was only relative, and since Mr. Tracey clearly had no trade, profession, or calling, yet contrived to wear the most faultless

clothes; he could not be without private means.

Besides, this girl who set such poor store by men's hearts and best feelings, was yet a keen judge of their outer self.

Alma knew by instinct that Rupert Tracey did not belong to the order of working bees. Kenneth Dane had been a gentleman, but he lacked the stamp of fashion, the indescribable air of a person who has never in his life been at another's beck and call, or toiled for money.

Alma gave one look at her lover's faultless attire, and handsome face, then she took courage.

"I am not afraid of being poor," she said, sweetly; "but your people may not think me good enough for you. I want to school with the Carletons, but my home is not like theirs. My aunt is poor, and she lets lodgings to add to her income."

"I only love you better, dear, for your frankness," said Rupert; "but, Alma, what your aunt is can make no difference to my wishes. It is you I want to marry, little girl, not your relations, and as to my people, I have none. So far as I know, I am the very last of my name."

"There is your cousin, Lord Tracey," suggested Alma, in a timid voice. "One of the Carletons told me he very often visited Mrs. Middleton, a very rich lady, and that he was going to marry a great heiress."

"He is not," said Rupert, smiling. "The fact is, Alma, I have kept a secret from you, but you will forgive me, sweet. When I told Miss Carleton my name was Tracey, and that I had met her at Mrs. Middleton's, though no one introduced us, she jumped to the conclusion that I was cousin to the Lord Tracey of whom she had heard so much."

"And aren't you?" asked Alma, in rather a disappointed voice, for to have married a nobleman's cousin would have been a great triumph in her eyes.

"Why, no, dear," said Rupert, smiling. "I never even heard that Lord Tracey possessed a cousin, and I ought to know, seeing that I am that individual myself."

"You are Lord Tracey?"

"Don't look so terrified, my darling. I assure you I will drop the title if it frightens you. Indeed, I am so poor that, perhaps in any case, it would be wiser. A nobleman, with an estate so encumbered he can't live on it, and an income smaller than many a secretary's, is not a very grand person, Alma!"

"You shall not abuse yourself," she said, prettily. "You are my lord, and I won't have you grumble about being poor. I mean to be very proud of your title. But oh! how wonderful it is that a nobleman should care for me!"

"There is nothing surprising in that," returned Rupert. "Alma, for your sake I mean to turn over a new leaf, and go in for hard work. I have something of my own already, and very soon I hope to be rich enough to give my darling a home worthy of her."

"Don't work too hard," she pleaded, sweetly.

"I want a great deal for you," said Rupert, slipping off a thick gold ring from his little finger, and putting it on her left hand. "You must wear this, Alma, till I can find an engagement ring for my darling. It will at least remind you that you belong to me now, and not all the aunts in the world have a right to scold my fiancée, the future Lady Tracey."

And the strangest part of this engagement was, that unknown to each other, both Rupert and Alma had once thought to marry into the same family—the Danes!

Time alone would show the strange link between their future and that of the two who still bore the grand old name of Dane. What would Honor think of the woman who had won the love she yearned for? How would Kenneth feel on hearing how soon Alma had put another in his place?

(To be continued.)

ALETHEA'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XLII.

'Tis well—my soul shakes off its load of care
'Tis only the obscure is terrible.
Imagination frames events unknown,
In wild, fantastic shapes of hideous ruin;
And what it fears creates!

Hannah More.

NATALIE had suspected truly—for Lord Templecombe carried within his breast a fearful load of remorse for his unpremeditated crime. The startled shriek of his drowning wife rang continually in his ears, and, which ever way he looked, his morbid imagination pictured her wan, dead face close to his, her wet and dripping hair, and her cold blue eyes fixed upon his with a look of dread accusation and reproach.

At times he was tempted to drown his thoughts and give vent to his suppressed excitement in a fierce scream, and it required all his self-command to keep his voice even and quiet and his manner unobtrusive.

He had assumed an artificial gaiety since his return to the Castle, but his forced laughter sounded hollowly to himself, and he had started at it once or twice in fear lest it should summon to him the spectre of his murdered bride.

The hours of the day and evening he spent with the Castle guests, but when night came and he was obliged to retire to his own chambers, he glanced at the innocent shadows in the corners of his rooms, as if he saw lurking there the restless ghost of Natalie, and finally summoned his valet to him.

"Roke," he said, with more than his usual kindness of manner to his dependant, "I am very nervous to-night. I think I am going to be ill. I would like you to sleep in my dressing-room!"

"Very well, my lord," responded the valet, exhibiting no surprise that his lordship should be nervous. "I will just go down to the servants' hall—"

"No, it will not be necessary. I do not want to be left alone for a single instant. I will go to bed immediately!"

The valet bowed, and proceeded to disrobe his master, finally conducting him to the alcove and assisting him into the low French bed.

His lordship's manner frightened him, and he quietly placed his fingers upon his pulse, noticing how quickly and unevenly it beat.

"Your lordship needs a good sleep," he said. "You made a journey to the Fens yesterday, my lord, and slept little last night, and your nervous system is consequently out of order. You will be all right by morning."

"I hope I shall be!" muttered the guilty lord, uneasily avoiding the gaze of his servant. "There, that will do! Go into the dressing-room, Roke, and go to sleep—only sleep lightly that you may hear me if I call you. Leave your door partly open—there, go!"

"In a moment, my lord. I hope that Miss Natalie caused you no trouble yesterday?"

"What is it to you whether she did or not?" cried Lord Templecombe, annoyed at his valet's familiarity of speech. "Go to bed!"

Roke frowned darkly under his brows, and looked at his master in a way that boded his lordship no good. He seemed on the point of saying something, but thought better of it, and passed quietly into the dressing-room.

His look haunted Lord Templecombe.

He had not been in the habit of treating his valet well, using towards him more harsh looks and scornful words than considerate ones; except, indeed, when Roke was employed by him in some nefarious work, as had been the case upon more than one occasion, and then he had rewarded him liberally, and addressed him almost as an equal.

He knew that he was in the man's power, and from what he knew of the valet's charac-

ter, he realized that he could have no affection for his master, and no interest in his welfare or happiness.

Roke was as eminently selfish as was his lordship.

What if the fellow should bring out the truth in regard to his master's marriage with Mrs. Afton's grand-daughter? He had stolen the record from the marriage register in the little old church of Falconbridge, and perhaps that missing leaf was now in his possession, although he had declared it destroyed. He might produce it at some future time, making it the basis of a claim for more money.

The thought that it might be in existence tortured the Earl.

Yet he asked himself why the thought should render him uneasy. Even if the marriage could be proved, his young wife was dead, and he was perfectly free.

Restless and uneasy, unable to sleep, and seeming to see the pale, cold face of Natalie whenever he closed his eyes, he sat up in his bed, and called,—

"Roke! Roke!"

The valet quickly responded to the call, coming half-dressed from the adjoining room.

"Turn on the light, Roke. Why have you made the room so dark? I do not like the shadows in the corners. There, that will do."

Roke awaited further orders.

"Sit down. I want to talk with you."

The valet obeyed.

His lordship hesitated how to commence the conversation he was determined upon holding with his servant, but decided to approach the matter without circumlocution. He therefore said, as carelessly as possible,—

"You were speaking of Miss Natalie a few minutes since; and your inquiry has reminded me of one I wish to make of you. I have wished several times that you had brought me that leaf, that I might have burned it myself. I should then have been quite sure of its fate. You are very positive that you burned every shred of it?"

Roke endeavoured to conceal an involuntary smile by putting his hand to his mouth, but the movement was too late.

"What do you mean by laughing at me, you rascal?" cried the Earl in a rage.

"Nothing, my lord. I was only thinking of the old adage that if you want anything well done you should do it yourself!"

"How does that impudent remark apply to me? I paid you well for what you did."

"True, my lord; you could not very well incur the risk of being discovered in the church making free with the parish books, or engaged in opening locks with skeleton keys."

The Earl regarded his valet closely, and the latter returned the gaze with a boldness that gave him a momentary alarm.

"Roke," he said, after a pause, "I am inclined to doubt your word. I don't believe you ever burned that missing leaf. I should not wonder if you had it yet in your possession!"

The valet smiled and stroked his chin complacently, as if he had received a compliment.

"Give it me!" said the Earl.

"I cannot do that, my lord. As you suspect, I have got the missing leaf, containing the record of your marriage, but, having taken so much pains to get it, I shall not easily part with it. That paper will make my fortune!"

"Make your fortune?"

"Yes, my lord. I am thinking of getting married to Marie, Lady Leopold's maid, and we talk of emigrating to Australia and setting up for quality folks. Of course we can't do that without money."

"I should think not," and the Earl forced a laugh. "How much would satisfy your demands?"

"Two hundred pounds a year!"

His lordship again laughed, but his merriment was not so forced this time. His

valet's conduct seemed to him supremely ridiculous.

"You have mistaken the case, Roke," he said, seriously. "I shall not buy that paper of you, and it is not of the slightest value to you!"

"Why not, my lord?"

The Earl hesitated, shuddered, and then said, boldly,—

"Because Natalie Afton, who is named therein, is dead. She drowned herself last night at the Fens, because I would not acknowledge her!"

"I think it more likely that your lordship pushed her into the river!" said the man composedly.

"Scoundrel! What do you mean?"

Roke gave a minute to reflection, unheeding the wrathful attitude of his master.

He had been on his way to the Earl's rooms after midnight, walking along in his stealthy, silent manner, when he had suddenly beheld approaching him the two sisters, the elder bearing the small lamp we have mentioned.

He had recognised Natalie in an instant, and had wondered at her apparent intimacy with Lady Leopold, and at her presence at the Castle at that hour.

His curiosity aroused, he shrank close to the wall until they had passed him, and then, removing his shoes, he had stolen after them up to the very top of the tower, arriving in time to hear the bolt click in the lock.

He then listened a few moments, learning nothing save that the sisters must have gone into an inner chamber, to hold a private conference, he thought, and he determined to be a listener to it.

As no other way of compassing his desires offered itself, he took from his pocket an article which he called "nippers," and with these he skillfully turned the key in his lock, and pushed open the door of the ante-chamber, thus hearing all that passed in the inner room.

When he heard Lady Leopold call his master's deserted wife her own sister he started in surprise, and uttered an exclamation, fortunately, the sisters were too excited to hear.

He had made his escape and turned the bolt of the lock just in time to escape unseen, and then had hastened towards the Earl's rooms, absorbed in a brilliant scheme that suggested itself to his fertile imagination.

He was resolved that the discovery he had made should yield him a golden harvest.

It was his intention to prevent any explanation between the Earl and his wife for the present, for he feared that when Natalie should prove herself an Earl's daughter by an honourable marriage her husband would no longer hesitate to declare her his Countess. Her birth would be as good as his lordship's own, and her lineage the same, except that she sprang from the elder branch of the family, and he might be even proud of the alliance.

The artful valet felt that all his skill was now required to bring about a state of affairs by which his fortune should be made, but he also felt equal to the emergency.

CHAPTER XLIII.

His lordship's bell sounded as Roke came along the corridor, and he had welcomed it as an omen of success.

He obeyed his master's command to retire, in order that he might perfect his schemes undisturbedly, and had come back to his call prepared to put them into execution.

"There is no use in calling names, my lord," he said, at length replying to the last question of his master. "I could call you worse names than scoundrel—lord though you are. I never tried to commit murder!"

"Murder?" said the Earl, a cold sweat breaking out upon his face, and trembling violently. "I know nothing about murder!"

"I do! And I may be called upon to tell

what I know, unless I am paid for keeping silence!"

"You can't blackmail me, Roke," blustered his lordship. "The girl threw herself into the river, and I had nothing to do with her conduct. I can't be deemed responsible for her suicide!"

"But you might have rescued her!"

"I—I can't swim!"

"Has your lordship forgotten how to swim since last year when you swam a match with Lord Vilbury, and won, too?"

The Earl stared at him without replying.

"But I deceived you, my lord," resumed the valet, coolly, "in saying that you committed murder and that I must be paid to keep the secret. You did not commit murder!"

"I am glad you acknowledge it."

"But it was not because you were innocent of the intention. Miss Natalie was rescued!" "Rescued!" cried his lordship, incredulously.

"Yes, my lord. I don't know who saved her, but I know she is alive. In fact, I saw her this very night!"

"Impossible!" breathed the Earl, sinking back upon his pillow, white with fear.

"Not so, my lord. Miss Natalie is alive and well, and her heart is full of hatred towards you. She intends to avow herself your wife to-morrow before the guests and inmates of the Castle, and declare the attempt you made upon her life!"

"She would not dare to do so!" declared his lordship, nervously.

"An injured woman dares do anything!"

"No one would believe her!"

"Perhaps not," said the artful valet. "If her statements were unsupported. But if she could bring a witness to her assistance, no one could gainsay her words. If she could have someone to testify to her marriage, to her relations towards your lordship, Lady Leopold would receive her with open arms."

His lordship clutched his pillow, replying, in a tone meant to be ingratiating,—

"That might be, Roke. But she cannot find a witness. The old pew-opener is in an hospital with paralysis, or some such thing, and the only other witness to the marriage was yourself. And I know you will be true to my interests."

"I will be true to my own, my lord. Self first, always. It's been so with you, and why shouldn't it be so with me? I shall do whatever I can to better myself—anything short of murder!"

The Earl winced, and wished fervently that Natalie had been really drowned, and that Roke was dead also.

A horrible incubus seemed weighing upon him, threatening him with loss of honour, reputation, and all he held dear.

He did not realize that honour had parted from him long ago.

"I suppose, Roke," he said, "money would command your services in any way. You would as soon serve me as her?"

"Certainly, my lord. If you're a mind to pay me what I shall ask I'll give you the paper and keep mum. No, that won't do either," he added, cunningly, to enhance the value of his silence and services. "You can say what you'll give me, and I'll see the girl to-morrow and see how much more she'll bid. I presume she'll pay handsomely to exchange her nameless and friendless condition for the name and rank of a Countess. Perhaps I had better see her first."

These words goaded the Earl to the very verge of endurance.

The remembrance of Natalie's namelessness of her want of dignity, and her simplicity, &c., came into his mind, and he shrank from acknowledging her more than before.

Misinterpreting his lordship's emotion, Roke tapped his breast significantly to indicate that the missing leaf of the marriage register was on his person, and could be bidden for.

At sight of this insolent movement, Lord

Templecombe sprang from his bed and rushed upon his valet.

"Give it me, you scoundrel!" he cried, hoarsely. "Give it me, or I'll choke you!" He clasped the throat of his valet with iron fingers, and shook him as a terrier might shake a rat.

Roke gasped for breath and his eyes started from their sockets.

He had not expected such violence as this from his master, whom he had regarded as a coward, who would war only upon women.

He struggled and resisted, but he could not shake off that gripe upon his throat.

The Earl's face was almost demoniacal in its rage, and his breath came hotly and quickly through his lips, as he pressed his visage close to that of his valet's and again bade him to yield up the paper.

"I—I ca—" he gasped, the word stopped off by the pressure upon his windpipe.

"Oh—" "Give it me!" repeated the Earl, imprinting his sharp nails into his victim's flesh.

"And promise—" Unable longer to endure his physical agony, Roke ceased his contortions and ineffectual struggles, arose with one mighty effort, put out his hands against his lordship, and flung him from him.

He fell against the corner of the marble-topped table and then descended heavily upon the floor.

The valet shook himself to make sure he was safe, tied a handkerchief around his throat to stop the dripping of blood from his wounds, and then, with an indefinable fear chilling him to the core, advanced to his master's side.

"My lord, are you hurt?" he asked.

There was no response.

He crept nearer, knelt beside the prostrate Earl, and lifted his head upon his knee.

He then perceived a cut upon the temple, from which the blood streamed upon the carpet. His lordship's face was ghastly.

Roke carried him to the bed, bandaged his brow with a towel as well as he could, and bathed his face in cold water, and held smelling-salts to his nostrils.

Under this treatment he soon began to show signs of returning consciousness.

He opened his eyes, recognized his attendant, and said, faintly,—

"The paper—the paper!"

"Your lordship may have it on payment of the sum I mentioned and two thousand pounds down!" said the cautious valet.

The Earl shook his head and groaned.

"A thousand, then," cried Roke, frightened at the aspect of his master's face, and fearful lest he should get nothing.

He knew if his bargain were not concluded that night it would never be made, and he knew that Lady Templecombe would not be likely to buy it of him, for if she were to declare her parentage her husband would acknowledge her.

And another thought influenced him.

There was a look on his master's face that comes only upon those who are near death!

"Five hundred!" he said, as his lordship made no reply.

The Earl nodded assent, and said,—

"Go to my desk—stay! Give me the paper first! The money is in my travelling desk!"

Roke drew from his pocket a tobacco-box, opened it, and took out a small piece of paper, which, on being unfolded, was seen to be the missing leaf of the register.

He laid it beside his lordship, hastened to the small writing-desk, the key of which was in the lock, and took out several bank-notes, their sum amounting to that required.

He then returned and looked at his master.

"Call a doctor, Roke!" said his lordship, faintly. "I feel as if I were dying. Help! Give me help!"

"I will! I'll go for the doctor," answered Roke, stuffing his money in his bosom.

"You're badly off, my lord, and no mistake, but you'll be all right yet!"

He hastened from the room, went downstairs, made his way to the stables, aroused a groom, procured a horse, saying that Lord Templecombe was ill, and then rode swiftly away from the Castle.

But he did not go in search of a physician.

He flew over the road and across the country as if a constable were at his heels to arrest him on a charge of murder!

CHAPTER XLIV.

The tongues of dying men
Enforced attention, like a deep harmony;
Where words are scarce they're seldom spent in
vain;
For they breathe truth that breathe their words
in pain.

Shakespeare.

LORD TEMPLECOMBE awaited impatiently the return of his valet, the minutes seeming hours, and the pain in his head increasing until he could only moan in his agony, and put up his hands as if to ward off the blows that appeared to descend with terrible regularity upon his shrinking temples.

But Roke did not return.

"Why doesn't he come?" cried the wounded man, restlessly. "I'll have him arrested for murder. No, not murder, for I'm not going to die, but for assault—oh, dear, why doesn't he come? Roke! Roke!"

And thus a half-hour that seemed a century rolled away.

The light that gleamed in the chandelier grew intolerable, distressing the Earl even when his eyes were tightly closed, and his head grew hot and he thought longingly how pleasant it would be to drink some cold water, and to feel a cool hand upon his forehead.

He conjured up these fancies until he became almost delirious.

In his pain, thoughts of his suffering wronged wife came to his mind.

One moment he beheld her lying at the bottom of the sullen river that wound among the Fens, and the next remembering his valet's words, he beheld her alive and well, and about to denounce him to the world as her husband and her murderer.

"No! no!" he said, crouching in his bed. "I did not kill her. She will tell you so herself. She isn't my wife—she isn't indeed. She's only a nameless girl, and I've the record quite safe," and he felt feebly around him for the leaf Roke had abstracted from the register and just sold to him.

He could not find it, and a fiercer pain caused him momentarily to forget it.

At this juncture the door of his room noiselessly opened, and a soft, rustling sound was heard in the little parlour.

"Is that you, Roke?" he asked, feebly.

The intruder came forward without replying, and stood by his bedside, under the full light of the chandelier.

It was Natalie.

The sick man recognized her, with sudden alarm, but with none of the deadly affright his young wife had expected, and murmured,—

"Yes, she's alive. Her blood isn't on my hands. Oh, go away, Natalie, go away!"

"No, Vane, I shall not go away," answered his wife, in clear, cold tones that alarmed him yet more than her unexpected appearance.

"I am here, alive—thanks to another more than you—and here I shall remain until justice is done me!"

The Earl groaned.

His despairing utterance called Natalie's attention to his condition, and she discovered the wound upon his forehead and the fever flush upon his cheek at the same moment.

"Go away, Natalie," said the husband, almost incoherently. "You are not my wife, and I don't want you: I won't have you here!"

Again he felt for the paper, which lay just beyond his reach.

Natalie picked it up to hand to him, but something in its appearance decided her to examine it, and she unfolded it.

Imagine her joy as she discovered its purport.

She stood a little way from the bed, the missing leaf in her hand, and her eyes fairly devouring the record of her marriage, and her face transfigured with an almost holy joy.

How Heaven had blessed her upon that night!

Within a few hours she had discovered her lawful, honourable parentage, and now she possessed proofs of her marriage.

Glad tears sprang to her eyes, her heart leaped with joy, and, forgetful of the presence or condition of her guilty husband, she knelt beside his bed, and poured forth her grateful thanks to the kind Providence that had watched over and shielded her in all her misfortunes, rewarding her at last with this exceeding great joy.

And then she arose, folded the paper, put it in her bosom, and came closer to her husband.

"Elmer, dear," she said, softly, feeling a tenderness even for him in that moment.

"How did you hurt your forehead? Do you feel very ill?"

"Yes," he answered, faintly, "very ill. Send for doctor—doctor—Nat—"

His voice faltered, and his senses seemed to melt away.

In a dream, as he thought, he felt Natalie's soft hand upon his forehead and heard her pitying exclamations, felt her bathing and binding his wound, and smoothing his pillows, and finally pressing a kiss upon his face, and he was conscious of a vague pleasure at being thus ministered to and by her.

And then he heard her softly cross the floor and pull the bell cord, and return to his side.

Then the dream faded and all was blankness.

He lay there motionless as if dead, and Natalie listened to his low breathing, fearing that life had departed; but in a moment she was reassured.

He had only fainted.

She was obliged to ring again before her summons was answered, and the second time she gave a furious peal, which had the effect of bringing a servant to her within a few minutes.

She opened the door to him herself.

"Lady Leopold!" exclaimed the servant, an old and favourite retainer in the family.

"I am not Lady Leopold," answered Natalie, with gentle dignity. "I am Lady Templecombe, the wife of Lord Templecombe, who is very ill. His lordship has received some sudden injury upon his head, and I want a physician summoned immediately!"

"There is one in the house at this moment, my lady," returned the puzzled servant, believing, notwithstanding her assertion to the contrary, that he addressed Lady Leopold.

"Miss Wycherly was took with a fainting-spell in the library early in the evenin', and a doctor has been sent for and he is here yet. I'll fetch him to you, my lady!"

"Do so without an instant's delay. And then send the housekeeper to me. And bring me word," added the young wife anxious for Aletia, "of Miss Wycherly's health!"

She dismissed the servant by a wave of her hand, and returned to the bedside of the Earl, ministering to him with all the tenderness of a loved and loving wife.

Only a few minutes passed when the physician made his appearance.

He was a venerable old gentleman, who had been for forty years the family physician of the Wycherlys.

He regarded the young wife with curiosity, believing her to be Lady Leopold, but a moment's scrutiny of her fair face and blue eyes convinced him of his mistake, without abating his curiosity.

"I am Lady Templecombe," said the young

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wife, flushing under his gaze, and feeling it necessary to declare her position at the outset.

"My husband is very ill, I think!"

She conducted him to the bed, and the physician devoted his attention to the Earl feeling his pulse and examining his wound.

"How did he receive this hurt?" he asked.

"I do not know. I found him in this present condition when I entered the room less than half an hour since. He was then able to speak to me. Is this wound dangerous?"

The physician looked grave and replied that it was, and that only the tenderest nursing could conduct his lordship through the illness and restore him to health.

"He shall have it!" said Natalie. "I will watch over him night and day, and I believe he will recover!"

"We will hope so," returned the physician, turning from his patient to the young wife. "I understood you to name yourself Lady Templecombe. I did not know that his lordship was married. In fact, I understood that he was a suitor for the hand of Lady Leopold!"

"I have been Lord Templecombe's wife for several months," said Natalie, quietly. "Our marriage has been kept secret until now for private reasons!"

"So you are the Earl's wife! Pardon me, my lady, but you might be a Wycherly yourself!"

"And so I am!" declared the young wife. "I am the younger daughter of the late Lord Templecombe by his second wife, Amy Afton."

She spoke with a quiet assurance that showed she felt her position to be unassailable.

"Is it possible?" ejaculated the physician, regarding her narrowly. "I thought you died in your infancy."

Natalie started.

"Did you ever hear of me before?" she asked.

"Since the secret has come out, I suppose I am absolved from my oath to keep silence," remarked the physician, thoughtfully. "Yes, my lady, I have heard of you, and seen you, too, years and years ago—though it seems but yesterday."

"Tell me what you know of me," said Natalie, breathlessly. "Did you know my mother?"

"Yes, and your father also. I have been the family physician of the Wycherlys so long that their affairs have become nearly as familiar to me as my own. About two years after the death of the mother of Lady Leopold, Lord Templecombe came to me one day, and, having sworn me to the strictest secrecy, informed me that he had privately married a beautiful young girl of humble birth several months previous to his call upon me, and he desired my attendance upon her."

"As I was his family physician he preferred my services to that of another, deeming, perhaps, that my testimony might be of value at some future period. He declared that should the unexpected child prove to be a son, he should immediately acknowledge his second marriage. In the event of its being a girl there would be no need of haste. He was very desirous of having an heir, being not over-fond of his nephew."

As he made this allusion, the physician glanced at the occupant of the bed, but the Earl gave no sign of consciousness.

"He took me with him to a pretty, secluded cottage, called, I think Mount Rose," continued the Doctor, "and introduced me to an elfin creature who was the second wife. She was beautiful enough to tempt a king to stoop to wed her, and I ceased to wonder that his lordship had wedded so soon after the death of his first wife. I remained there until after the birth of their child. Unfortunately, it was not an heir. I returned home, and some months later his lordship died suddenly, without ever having acknowledged his second marriage. A few months after his death I went to Mount Rose to seek out his wife and child, but learned from a consumptive old woman,

who had been the only servant about the place, that her mistress had taken the child to her mother's home, where both had died. It seems, however, that she survived. And so you are the late Lord Templecombe's younger daughter?"

"Yes, I am Amy Afton's child," said Natalie, somewhat proudly. "Until lately I knew nothing of my father or his family."

"Does Lady Leopold know of your relationship to her?"

"My sister!" said the Earl's young wife, with a sudden kindling of eye and cheek. "It is to her I owe my knowledge of the truth—my dear, sweet sister."

The physician smiled approvingly upon the girlish enthusiasm of Natalie, and said,—

"You may well be proud of her, Lady Templecombe. She is as pure and as good as she is beautiful. I am glad to find that the wrong has righted itself at last, for I used often to think pityingly of that sweet young girl at Mount Rose, whose position must often have been unpleasant. How strange it is that you should bear the title denied to your mother, and that you should be the wife of your father's successor. Strange things happen in this world. Well, my lady," he added, "I will make every effort to save to you your husband, and I hope you may spend many happy years with him yet!"

He returned to the Earl.

"Is Miss Wycherly very ill?" inquired Natalie, following him.

"She has received a severe shock of some sort, and she may succumb under it. She has an excellent constitution, but I cannot tell how her illness will result. She will not allow Lady Leopold to be summoned, and cannot bear that anyone should remain with her except her waiting woman."

Natalie expressed her sorrow and anxiety.

Not many minutes elapsed before the entrance of the housekeeper, and from her glances of surprise at the young wife the good doctor discovered that Natalie was a stranger to her. He introduced the young wife as Lady Templecombe, and explained that she had come to attend upon the Earl who was ill.

The night wore on, the housekeeper sharing Natalie's vigils, and the physician retiring to the dressing-room to catch a little sleep in the intervals of his attendance upon his two patients.

When morning came the Earl was raving in all the wildness of delirium.

Listening to his frenzied utterances, the physician and Natalie learned of his combat with Roke, and how his injury had been received, and the former thought it necessary to despatch some of the Castle servants after the absconding valet, with a view of compelling his return.

We may as well remark here that Roke was not found by his pursuers.

Natalie's breakfast was served in one of the rooms belonging to the Earl's suite, and when she had concluded the repast she left her husband in the care of the worthy housekeeper and hastened down to the rooms of Lady Leopold.

Her ladyship was robed for breakfast, and knew nothing of the occurrence of the night. She was quite alone, and received Natalie with open arms, saying,—

"You little truant! Have you spent the night with aunt Alethea? I expected you to return and sleep with me!"

"I couldn't, sister. Vane is dreadfully ill. Roke pushed him against the table and injured his head, and he is delicious now. He doesn't even know me! But see what I have found!" and she waved the long-lost, newly-discovered leaf of the church register above her head. "Oh, sister, dear sister, read that!"

Lady Leopold took it, and read carefully the entry to which the young wife directed her attention.

"I am very glad, for your sake, Nattie," she said, kissing her tenderly when she had

finished. "Have you told Vane of your discovery of last night?"

"No. I had no time, you know. Has anyone told you, Leo, of Aunt Alethea's illness?"

"Is Aunt Alethea ill?" cried Lady Leopold, the colour fading from her lovely face.

"What is the matter with her?"

"I don't know. The doctor is greatly troubled about her, and considers her recovery doubtful!"

"Aunt Alethea!" exclaimed Lady Leopold, in the sharp tones of pain. "Oh, I must go to her, Nattie. My dear Aunt Alethea! Why was I not summoned to her?"

She moved towards the door, then begged Natalie to return to her room again soon, or to wait for her until her return, and then she sped along the corridors with a fleet step to the door of the ante-room of the eastern tower.

As she paused there, waiting for admission, she observed Lord Waldemere walking up and down the passage.

The expression of his ghastly countenance startled her, and, as no one replied to her summons, she turned to him and said,—

"Oh, my lord, do you know anything of Aunt Alethea's illness? Is she going to die?"

"To die?" cried the Marquis, hollowly.

"Why, she only fainted!"

"But the physician thinks her recovery doubtful!"

"You must be mistaken, Lady Leopold. I beg your pardon, but she will not die. The idea is too absurd," and his lordship strove to smile. "Way, Alethea Wycherly's heart is of stone. Die! She is only affecting illness so that I will leave her roof!"

The manner of the Marquis was so strange that Lady Leopold shrank from him, and knocked again upon the door, but this time more loudly.

Footsteps were heard within the ante-room approaching the door, and his lordship advanced to the maiden's side, awaiting the appearance of old Alison with startling eagerness.

The next moment the door was cautiously opened a few inches, and the grim waiting-woman peered out.

"Your lordship here again?" she said, harshly, and attempting to close the door in his face.

"I am here, Alison!" said Lady Leopold, putting her hand into the aperture to prevent the shutting of the portal. "I want to see my aunt!"

"Your ladyship cannot see her I'm sorry to say," answered the woman, her manner changing. "I've just given her an opiate, and she must sleep."

"But how is she, Alison?"

"No better, no worse."

"But what is the matter with her?"

"I suspect my lady has got her death-blow," and the old waiting woman suppressed a sob. "She has suffered enough in her day, but never like this, poor lamb! I'm afraid she's going to die!"

"If you'd only let me speak with her!" pleaded the Marquis. "Only one moment! I have something to say that will do her good!"

Alison shut the door in his face.

With a smothered moan the Marquis moved heavily away from the door, and resumed his weary pacing up and down the passage, forgetting that Lady Leopold still lingered.

But the maiden did not remain long.

If her aunt were sleeping, it would be best to keep the Castle as noiseless as possible, and, with her usual thoughtfulness, she moved about, giving directions to the servants, and informing the guests of the illnesses of Miss Wycherly and of Lord Templecombe.

It was a silent party that met in the breakfast-room that morning.

A general gloom pervaded the establishment and settled down upon the usually bright faces

of the Lady Ellen Haigh and the Misses Braithwaite.

Lady Leopoldo, usually the life of the company, was sad, and strove continually to repress her tears; Basil Montmaur was unusually grave and quiet; Sir Wilton Werner scarcely spoke, and Mrs. Braithwaite was troubled and uneasy, appearing throughout the meal upon the point of saying something, which she did not find courage to express.

Lord Waldemere was not present. At length Mrs. Braithwaite broke the silence.

"My dear Lady Leopoldo," she said, hesitatingly, "do you not think Miss Wycherly and Lord Templecombe are suffering from a contagious fever? I would not for the world that my girls should get it too. I think I had better take them home, for guests at such a time as this are only a trouble and annoyance, and I beg you to accompany us, and remain at our home until your relatives shall have recovered."

"I thank you for the invitation, Mrs. Braithwaite," was the reply, "but I can't leave Aunt Alethea at this time, nor my—my cousin."

Mrs. Braithwaite expressed her regret at this resolution, and reiterated her resolve to return home with her daughters.

"What a pity," said Sir Wilton, trifling with some crumbs beside his plate. "It is too bad that sickness should have come at this time, just when we were going to have our tableaux, too. I had counted so much upon seeing Miss Wycherly as Cleopatra!"

This remark elicited no reply. As the Braithwaites were going, Lady Ellen Haigh could not remain, and the various members of the party, with the exception of Basil Montmaur, declared an intention of departing from the Castle within the hour.

"May I stay, Leopoldo?" inquired Basil, when the guests had retired to their own rooms. "Or will you banish me?"

"I see no harm in your remaining, Basil. You are a relative, you know. Go into the drawing-room. I wish to make you a communication."

Montmaur obeyed, and his betrothed followed him, and informed him of her discovery of a sister, &c.

"She is the loveliest, dearest girl you ever saw, Basil," she said, enthusiastically. "She is Vane's wife, and it was she whom you mistook for me, in a state of somnambulism. You have only to see her to love her. Oh, why didn't I know her years ago? If papa had only suffered us to grow up together! She loves me already!"

"I should be surprised if she did not," said Montmaur, drawing his betrothed nearer to him. "I don't see how she could well help it."

"Flatterer! But I want to tell you all about her sufferings. She has been so patient always, and she is so gentle and refined. I mean to keep her with me so long as we live. I do not think I can ever bear to have her away from me."

She proceeded to give him the particulars of Natalie's adventures, and was delighted with the full and perfect sympathy her confidence received from her future husband.

"She shall be my sister too, Leopoldo. Tell her so, please, that her poor wounded heart may be comforted with the thought that she is among true friends," he said, tenderly.

Leopoldo promised to convey his message.

Before she had time to speak farther, Richard Layne was announced.

He came in apologising for his early call, saying that he had brought over the jewelled serpent which was to play the part of asp upon Cleopatra's arm, but Lady Leopoldo interrupted him.

"We shall have no tableaux, Uncle Richard," she said, sadly. "Aunt Alethea is very ill. And Vane is delicious with fever. Our guests are going away by the morning train."

Layne's countenance fell, and he said,—

"Can I not see Miss Wycherly? I came on purpose—"

"I fear not."

The asp had but been a pretext for a private interview with Alethea, to blind the jealous eyes of Lord Waldemere, and Richard could hardly bear his disappointment at not seeing her. He had not expected the tableaux to take place, after the loss of little Arthur, and it was of him he had now come to converse with the bereaved young mother.

"I think she will see me when she knows I am here," he said.

"She would not see me this morning," replied Lady Leopoldo, almost impatiently. "She is too ill to think of tableaux now, Mr. Layne. And as we shall have none, it is scarcely worth while to disturb her slumbers to talk of them."

"She is sleeping, then? I will wait."

He seated himself near the window, watched the carriages as they came around, and the horses as they pawed the ground, endeavouring to forget that he had no good news to communicate to Miss Wycherly, but feeling that he must see her.

He had waited but a short time when the departing guests entered the drawing-room.

"You here, Richard?" said Lady Ellen Haigh, in a low tone, coming up to him. "I am glad to see you before I go. I am sorry to leave them all in such trouble here. I wish I might stay."

"It is best that you should go, dear. I will keep you informed of the state of Miss Wycherly's health."

"Then you will stay here?"

"I must stay at my home so as to be near at hand should I be wanted. Alethea Wycherly is as a dear sister to me, and I cannot leave her. There is another thing which detains me," and Richard thought of the missing boy.

"You must do as you think best, Richard," and Lady Ellen stifled a sigh. "Promise me, though, that you won't fight another duel with Lord Waldemere. I fear that he means you some deadly evil. Avoid him for my sake, dear Richard!"

"I promise to avoid him," replied Layne, delighted with the tender epithet attached to his name. "And I will follow you to your home as soon as I can, my darling Ellen. When I come," he added, "I shall claim the fulfilment of a certain promise and bring you back with me."

The pretty widow smiled and blushed, and whispered assent to his audacious remark.

"And now good-bye, Mr. Layne," she said, aloud, giving him her hand.

He took it, pressed it much more warmly than her assumed friendly indifference would warrant, and relinquished it to clasp the plump hand of Mrs. Braithwaite, who had approached them in time to witness the widow's pretty acting.

The adieus were at length said, final regrets uttered, promises to write given, and the guests then went out to the waiting carriages.

Richard Layne spoke a few final words to his betrothed, and the carriages then rolled away, the luggage having gone on in a waggon.

As they returned to the drawing-room, Richard summoned a servant and begged that his card might be taken up to Miss Wycherly's room.

His command was obeyed.

A few minutes later, to the unbounded astonishment of Lady Leopoldo and Basil, the servant returned with the message that Miss Wycherly would see Mr. Layne in her private parlour.

Richard followed the servant upstairs to the eastern tower, encountering Lord Waldemere in the passage. Although startled by the Marquis's appearance, Layne bowed coldly to him and knocked at the door of the ante-room.

"It will do you no good," said the Marquis, hoarsely. "She is very ill, and sleeping, too."

The door opened a little way; Alison looked out, and exclaimed,—

"Oh, it's Mr. Layne! Come in, sir!"

And to Lord Waldemere's astonishment, Layne walked into the ante-room, and the door was locked. The Marquis's wild grief turned in an instant to wilder rage, and with a gratified laugh, he turned on his heel and went to his own room.

CHAPTER XLV.

I fear to die. And were it in my power, By suffering of the keenest racking pains, To keep upon me still these weeds of nature, I could such things endure that thou wouldst marvel.

And cross thyself to see such coward bravery.

For oh! it goes against the mind of man To be turned out from its warm wonted home, Ere yet one rent admits the winter's chill.

Joanna Baillie.

A fortnight passed, bringing with it little change to the inmates of Wycherly Castle. Miss Wycherly did not once leave her own apartments, and saw no one excepting her faithful nurse, the physician, and Richard Layne, who came to her every day to tell her that Arthur had not been found.

The search for the missing boy had flagged, for Layne believed he had come to his death by some accident, and the bereaved young mother thought that in a moment of jealous fury the Marquis had deprived the child of life. This thought it was that deprived her of her strength, and was wearing her into her grave.

On the morning after she had been taken ill, when Lord Waldemere had pleaded to be admitted into her presence, he had been upon the point of confessing the child's abduction, and had thought of going for him that very day, but the admission of Richard Layne to her apartments had aroused all his former desire for revenge, and he had resolved to let her suffer until the measure of her grief should be complete.

Moody and silent, therefore, the Marquis haunted the passage leading to her rooms, glowering at Richard Layne each time he passed inside the door of the antechamber, or wandered about the grounds, or dashed across the country upon his half-tamed steed, quietly unconscious that the family would have preferred his departure to his presence at the Castle during their season of gloom.

Only once did his lordship visit little Arthur at his school, and then the child had asked him so many questions about his mother, and had begged so earnestly to be taken to her, that he had resolved not to go again.

We have said that Alethea saw no one save her necessary attendants and Richard Layne, but we must not forget to state that she had once given audience to Lady Leopoldo and Natalie, had carefully examined the proofs of her late brother's second marriage and of Natalie's birth, and had welcomed Amy Affton's child as her niece, commending the course adopted by the elder sister.

She had rejoiced in the discovery of the lately missing leaf of the church register, and it was by her advice and command that the Earl's wife was known thenceforth as Lady Templecombe.

"It is not necessary to wait until Vane recovers, my dear," she said to the timidly protesting wife. "When he gets well he shall find you established here as his wife, and his confession will be easier. The discovery that you are his own cousin, and Lady Natalie Wycherly by birth, will put to rout all his designs of disowning you!"

And so as the sister of Lady Leopoldo and the wife of Lord Templecombe, Natalie took her rightful position at the Castle and by her husband's bedside.

During the fortnight that had passed since his conflict with Roke, the Earl had battled with a consuming fever which had never for

one moment relaxed its grasp upon his brain, or ceased to course along his veins.

He raved of the scene upon the little wooden bridge spanning the river near the Fens, and declared that he had not intended to kill Natalie, that she was not his wife, that she could prove nothing, and then he talked of remorse, of a never dying fear, and asked, with eyes standing out in their sockets, if it were true that the dead could return and haunt their murderer.

At such times, it was the hand of the ill-used wife that smoothed his forehead, and her sweet, low voice that talked soothingly to him, calming even his wildest frenzies.

As we have said, Natalie's love for him had utterly died out.

She would have been more or less than human could her heart have clung in tender reverence to the man who had deceived her, deserted her, and attempted to murder her.

But as she bent over him and listened to his wild words of remorse, and watched the fever-flush upon the cheek she had once so fondly kissed, and shrank from the vacant glance of the blue eyes that once had beamed so lovingly upon her, she forgot that he had but lately declared that he had never loved her, forgot all that was unpleasant in their past, and tried to recall again the glamour of those Eden like days of the preceding summer.

But she was no longer the thoughtless girl whom he had wooed and won near Afton Grange. Suffering and adventure had matured her into womanhood, which was more lovely by far than her girlhood, because of the sweet gravity of her brow, the thoughtful depths of her blue eyes, and the gentleness of her manner.

And so she could no more bring back the love that had gone than she could feel renewed trust and confidence in him.

Yet she was not without pity for him, and with all the devotedness and faithful care of an affectionate wife she ministered to his wants, watched over him and soothed him, scarcely giving herself needful rest and change of scene.

But at the end of the fortnight there came a change.

It was evening, and the lamp burned dimly, that its light might not disturb the patient who tossed restlessly upon his couch. The fragrant odour of freshly burned pastilles overpowered the sickly scent of medicines, and one window stood partly open, giving pure air to the occupants of the room.

Natalie bent over the couch, a scent-bottle in her hand, the contents of which she was sprinkling in perfumed spray upon the hot pillow and upon the unmoistened brow of her husband.

"Doctor," she said, in a low tone, without pausing in her task. "I wish you would stop here a moment."

The physician arose from the easy-chair in which he had spent the last hour—for he stayed almost continually in the Earl's room now—and came by the bedside, followed by the housekeeper.

"Is there any change?" he asked.

"I think he is not quite so restless," answered Natalie. "His strength seems to be leaving him."

"The fever-strength," returned the doctor, feeling his patient's pulse. "Your ladyship is right. The fever is leaving him. He will soon fall asleep, from which he will awaken raved or—"

He did not complete the sentence.

He kept his fingers upon the wrist of the Earl, an easy task, for the patient's movements had become less violent, his utterance more infrequent and disconnected, and a look of weariness became perceptible upon his hotly flushed face.

Natalie set away the scent-bottle.

Half-an-hour passed, and the Earl's tones had ceased, and he had fallen into a slumber so profound, that his young wife bent over

him again and again to listen to his breathing.

It was the first time he had slept since his illness had come upon him.

The housekeeper retreated to the farther corner of the room to pray in silence that the Earl might not be out off in his prime, but awoken to renew life and happiness with his bride.

The physician walked the floor in his list slippers, and thought of the Wycherlys he had tended in their illness, and wondered if the Earl would die, or be raised as by a miracle from his couch to take again his place among his fellow men.

And Natalie, with her husband's nerveless hand clasped in her own, sat beside the low French bedstead, and prayed for his recovery, and looked forward to a calm, loveless life with him.

In that long and weary vigil she set aside all the hidden and half-recognised dreams of her inner soul, and nerved herself to meet her future with womanly patience and fortitude. To keep faithfully the vows which she, at least, had taken in good faith at the altar; to be a true and faithful wife to him who had repulsed and so terribly wronged her; to walk by his side through weary years in unflinching kindness and cheerfulness—to these nobles displays of a truly Christian spirit Natalie educated herself in those dark hours, and a blessing from above descended upon her.

The hours wore on, and still the Earl slept. The doctor bent over him each time that his paces brought him to the couch, but there was no change.

The housekeeper's tongue had faltered in its prayers, and she had yielded to the weariness, falling asleep.

Glancing at her, the physician said, in a low tone,—

"Had your ladyship not better retire? You have not slept since yesterday, and you will be utterly exhausted by morning. I will take your place, and awaken you at the least change in the Earl."

The young wife shook her head, and pointed to her hand, about which her husband's fingers had faintly curled themselves in his sleep.

"I cannot leave him," she answered. "If he should not recover I should never forgive myself for not watching over him at the crisis of his disease. And if he should get well I shall but have done my duty."

The physician yielded to her wish, and resumed his walk.

Natalie had greatly puzzled him at first.

She had been unremitting in her attentions upon her husband, and failed in nothing that the most loving wife could have done, but she had never caressed the wasted hand she now held, had never kissed the fevered brow, had never wept over the restless form, had never implored him to save her husband, as loving wives were apt to do.

(To be continued.)

LETTY'S LOVE STORY.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HUBERT'S REVELATION.

LADY ALICIA sank into an arm chair, which happened to be standing near, and it was some minutes ere she could control herself sufficiently to speak. Her lips were dry, and she had to moisten them before the words came through.

"What does Miss Rufford say in her letter?"

"Simply that she is in London, and desires me to cease any further search for her."

"Is that all?"

Hubert bit his lip hard. If my lady had not been so wrapped up in her own anxieties,

she would have seen that he also was suffering from some overwhelming agitation.

"That is all, except that our engagement is at an end!"

Lady Alicia sprang to her feet.

"What!" she exclaimed.

Hubert repeated the words as calmly as he could, but he did not look at her.

"I don't understand," faltered Lady Alicia. "Does she give any reason for this extraordinary decision?"

"None; but she says that nothing on earth would induce her to marry me now."

He walked to the window and looked out, so that his hostess should not see his face. If he had not been utterly overcome by the humiliation of Letty's dismissal, he would never have taken Lady Alicia into his confidence like this; but as a matter-of-fact his senses were partly numbed by the surprise of the morning's events, and even yet he was not himself.

Lady Alicia also was puzzled, although a great load was suddenly lifted from her. Her heart was beating well nigh as quickly as when she entered the room; but it was with very different sensations!

She laid one small white hand on his arm.

"Tell me all, Hubert," she said, gently.

"You know how deep an interest I take in your welfare, and if you are in trouble, at least I can give you my sympathy."

"You are very good; but, at the present moment, I am incapable of coherent thought or speech. My mind is in a chaos, and until I have seen Sir Wilfred, I had better hold my tongue, I think," he returned, with a bitter laugh—unlike any she had ever heard from the lips of gay, bright, *debonnair* Hubert Ellesmere.

He had not long to stay. In a few minutes Sir Wilfred came in, and Lady Alicia, after waiting in order to give Hubert a chance of inviting her to share the interview, took her departure on seeing there was no prospect of such an invitation being given.

Hubert breathed a sigh of relief, as the door closed behind her.

"Sir Wilfred, I am in great trouble," he began, abruptly.

"My dear boy, I see you are," answered the Baronet, kindly. "And if I can do anything to help you, I shall be only too glad."

"Thank you. I came over to you for help and information, and I have no doubt you will give me both. This morning I had a letter from Miss Rufford."

"Thank Heaven for that!" interrupted Sir Wilfred, who had been seriously concerned about Letty's disappearance, and had been untiring in his efforts to trace her. "You will remove a great anxiety, if you can assure me of her safety."

"She is safe enough. It seems she saw one of the advertisements I inserted in the daily papers, offering a large reward for any information concerning her whereabouts, and she writes to tell me to withdraw all these advertisements immediately." Hubert then went on to repeat the parts of Letty's communication, that he had already told Lady Alicia, and added, "In conclusion, she referred me to a letter from her solicitor, which, she said, I should receive by the same post as her own."

"From her solicitor!" repeated Sir Wilfred, in amazement.

"Yes, a man named Ferroll. He writes to inform me that his client, Miss Letty Trevelyan, commonly called Letty Rufford, claims the whole of the Ellesmere estates, under a will executed by Isabel Ellesmere, nearly twenty years ago."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the Baronet, starting back a pace. "Is this possible?"

"Here is the letter, read it for yourself, and then you will see that I have simply stated the facts."

He handed the epistle to Sir Wilfred, who read it from beginning to end, Hubert watching him closely the while.

"Rather hard lines to have my promised wife and my estates taken away from me at

one blow, eh?" he said, with grim irony, that was meant to conceal his bitter pain.

"Hard lines, indeed, if it really comes to that," returned the Baronet, wringing his hand in silent sympathy. "But it cannot—it must not! We must come to some arrangement with this lawyer."

"Arrangement!" echoed Hubert. "Then am I to understand that you believe in the existence of this will to which he refers?"

"I am afraid I cannot doubt it. You see he says it is in his hands at the present moment, and a solicitor would hardly make an assertion of that kind, if such were not the case."

"But it is a forgery, it must be a forgery!" cried Hubert, vehemently. "Isabel Ellesmere would never have perpetrated such an act of injustice towards me!"

"Isabel Ellesmere was a woman who cannot be judged by the ordinary standards of honour and honesty," said Sir Wilfred, gravely. "And you must remember that she never showed any kindly feeling to you personally. On the contrary, she refused to let you come to the Grange during her lifetime."

"But I was her heir."

"Yes, only the estates were not entailed; therefore, she could leave them to whom she liked."

"But why should she leave them to Lettice, a girl of whom she had never even heard?" persisted Hubert.

The Baronet hesitated, then quickly made up his mind that the time had come, when it behoved him to tell the young man the story of Isabel Ellesmere and Otto Trevelyan, so that he would see the connection between them and Lettice.

As briefly and succinctly as possible he did so, Hubert listening in a species of stupefaction.

"At the same time," said Sir Wilfred, as he finished, "although I have very little doubt of the genuineness of the will, I am by no means certain that the law would uphold it. Miss Ellesmere was undoubtedly eccentric, and half the county believed her mad. You would have no difficulty in calling witnesses to prove this, and in all likelihood you could upset the will."

"Do you think I would descend to such a paltry depth as that?" cried the young man, scornfully. "If Isabel Ellesmere intended to leave her property to Otto Trevelyan's daughter, let her do so in Heaven's name! After all, she was trying to right a wrong, though it was a poor, cowardly way of making reparation; but I would be the last man in the world to take advantage of a legal quibble, in order to obtain a fortune that belonged of right to someone else. Besides," he added, his voice breaking down, "what is all the wealth of the Indus to me without Lettice?"

Sir Wilfred did not speak. His heart was sobbing at the sight of the poor fellow's grief, and yet he was so puzzled by this action on Lettice's part, that he was at a loss for words.

"Do you think, that if I had suddenly been created emperor of the world, it would have made one iota of difference to my feelings for her?" exclaimed Hubert, with a vehemence that was almost fierce. "I loved her so well that I should have gloried in laying wealth, and fame, and honour at her feet; and yet, when she finds herself mistress of a few paltry thousands a year, she throws me over like an old glove—tosses me on one side with as little compunction, as she would fling away a faded flower! That is woman's love for you!"

"Don't take such a bitter tone, Hubert," said Sir Wilfred. "There is a mistake somewhere. Depend upon it, Lettice is acting under some evil influence—this lawyer, perhaps."

"And what difference would that make, even if it were true? No. She is ambitious, like the rest of her sex, and now she sees vistas of rank and grandeur opening before her, that I could not give her. With her youth, her beauty, and her fortune, she may aspire to the

highest in the land—a coronet, or even the ducal strawberry leaves! And yet I would have staked my very soul on her faith!"

He groaned as he finished speaking, and leaned his head on his folded arms. Poor Hubert! Life had hitherto shown him its fairest side, and the suddenness of the change threatened to overwhelm him.

"Don't give way like this, Ellesmere," said Sir Wilfred, after a pause. "See Lettice yourself!"

"What is the good?"

"You would hear what she has to say."

"I have heard already—from her letter. Nothing could be plainer or franker. I can accuse her of no beating about the bush. She simply says she will not marry me. There is no getting behind that!"

"But perhaps she has been prejudiced against you?" suggested the Baronet again, rather helplessly.

"She was not the sort of girl to let other people prejudice her. She was strong, and capable, and self-reliant, not yielding and pliable to every impression."

"That is true. But she professed to love you?"

Hubert broke into a bitter laugh.

"Professed, yes! But she was poor then, and I was rich."

"Don't say that."

"Heaven knows I would cut my tongue out rather than have to say it; but what other conclusion is left me? Besides, she never took me into her confidence. She never mentioned this story of her father and Isabel Ellesmere to me."

"Because she thought it would grieve you to know it," put in the Baronet, eagerly, glad that at last he was able to defend Lettice. "It was partly by my own advice she kept silence."

Hubert looked incredulous.

"And yet she gave you Mr. Ferroll, as the one on which she discovered the will, was the very afternoon you and she were at the Grange together," he said, referring to the solicitor's letter, which was still lying open on the table. "If she had behaved honourably, she would have made her discovery public without delay."

Of course, Hubert knew nothing about the will being sealed up in an envelope, and directed to Marois; which, as the reader is aware, was the reason why Lettice kept silence respecting it.

"Does she give any explanation of why she left this house so suddenly, and kept us all in ignorance of where she was?" asked Sir Wilfred.

"Not a word; but it seems to me that her reasons are patent enough. She wanted to make sure that this will was all right, and so the very day after I left England, she went to London in order to make the necessary inquiries. The mystery of it all is as clear as daylight, is it not?"

He waited wistfully enough for the Baronet to speak, but no answer was forthcoming. The latter would have given a good deal to be able to contradict him, and Hubert would have given a good deal to be contradicted; but, in good truth, appearances were terribly against Lettice, and in his heart, Sir Wilfred already stigmatised her as an ambitious, designing girl, who had accepted Hubert when she was a poor governess for the sake of his money, and now threw him over in the hope of making a better match.

There was a long interval, during which neither of the two men spoke. At last Sir Wilfred said,—

"What are you going to do in answer to this letter of Mr. Ferroll's?"

"Write and tell him I'll clear out of the Grange to-morrow morning, and he can come and take possession as soon as he likes," was the reckless rejoinder.

"Nonsense! You will do nothing of the sort."

"What should you advise then?"

"Your best plan would be to go forward on the

letter to your own lawyer, Mr. Maxwell, and let him act as he thinks best."

"Which would be to fight tooth and nail for the estates!"

"Very probably. And he would be quite right."

"From his point of view, perhaps, not from mine. I tell you after this, I have no sort of desire to retain them, even if I could do so legally. No, I will write to him, and tell him to manage the business for me; but if he is of opinion that the will was really made by Miss Ellesmere, he is not to move a step further in the matter. I will go, and Lettice shall reign in my stead, and everybody will cry, 'The king is dead, long live the queen!' That is the way of the world, isn't it?"

"There is no reason why it should be in this particular instance, and I don't like to hear you speak in that cynical tone, Hubert. Even if you lose your money, you still have youth, and health, and strength."

Hubert turned upon him fiercely.

"And what will they avail me! The money is the least loss; though, I confess, I was proud of my name, and the fine old lands that had come down from many generations of Ellesmeres. But in losing my love, I have lost far more. All my trust in human nature is gone. I shall never again believe that truth, and purity, and tenderness can be found in women. What becomes of my future I care nothing. All chance of happiness is over for me, and I am hardened against fate itself, for it can scarcely hit me so hard in the future as it has already done in the past. If I were a coward, I would go and put a bullet through my brain; but unluckily I am not, so I must live on, and grin and bear it as best I can!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

TAKING POSSESSION.

A few days after the interview recorded in the last chapter, Lettice sat in the sitting-room of her lodgings in Brunswick-square, waiting for the arrival of Mr. Ferroll, whom she had appointed to see at four o'clock.

She was dressed in deep mourning, and her face was very pale; but perhaps her beauty was more striking than it had ever been. It had changed in character, it is true; there was no longer the bright, glad young girlish radiance, that had taken Hubert Ellesmere's heart captive in the garden at Woodside eighteen months ago; but in its place had come a queeny dignity, that made her look like some young empress.

The trouble she had gone through, had left its outward impress upon her in the sad drooping of her sweet, red lips, and a certain gravity in the lovely eyes. To herself she seemed ten years older than on the day she left Aldham Mount, and went forth to meet the sin and sorrow that had cast its blight over her life.

Her troubles had followed on each other in such swift succession. First the discovery of Hubert Ellesmere's treachery, and then the awful tragedy of poor Marcia's end. If Lettice lives to be a hundred years old, she will never forget that terrible moment, when Mr. Ferroll told her of her sister's suicide. It seemed as if all the youth froz up in her bosom, leaving her hard and cold, and eager for only one thing, retribution on the betrayer of Marcia, who had also—morally, though not legally—been her murderer!

To poor Lettice this represented itself as a sacred duty. The old Hebrew doctrine of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," seemed to her just and righteous. Should Hubert Ellesmere live on in riches, and luxury, and honour, while his victim lay in her nameless grave, branded with an eternal stigma of shame? No, a thousand times, no!

And so she resolved upon a course of action that under ordinary circumstances, she would have shrank from, and it was nothing more

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nor less than depriving Hubert of the heritage of which she knew he was so proud.

Only in this way could she avenge her sister's wrongs on the man who had been the cause of them.

She started slightly as the door opened, and the smutty-faced young person who acted as maid of all work in the lodging-house, announced,—

"Mr. Ferroll!"

"Well?" she said, questioningly, as the solicitor shook hands, and then seated himself opposite to her.

"I have an important communication for you," he returned, in rather a grandiose voice. "I want to see Mr. Maxwell, who is Mr. Ellesmere's lawyer, this morning, according to arrangement, and he informed me that it was his client's wish to give up possession of the Ellesmere estates to you at once."

Lettice drew a sharp breath; she had not counted on such an easy victory as this. At least she thought Hubert would make an effort to retain his fortune.

"They see they have not a leg to stand on," continued Ferroll, who had never had his fingers in such a big pie before, and was very proud of the part he was playing in this cause célèbre. "Mr. Maxwell convinced himself that the will was genuine, and so there was no more to be said. All you have to do now is to fix a day for going down to the Grange, and taking formal possession."

Lettice looked away so that the solicitor should not notice the burning flush that rose to her face and was succeeded almost immediately by a deadly pallor.

"Must I do this?" she asked, faltering a little.

"Certainly. You ought to make a semi-public entry, so as to show everybody that the Grange has a new owner."

For a moment Lettice quailed. It seemed to her the ordeal would be almost more than she could bear. Then her native spirit came to her aid, and she said, firmly,—

"Very well; then we will fix next Monday for going down. Will that do?"

"Perfectly."

"You will accompany me?"

"Assuredly, if you wish it!"

"I do wish it. I wish you to act as my agent, and manage all my affairs for me, if you will be so good?"

Mr. Ferroll bowed, and blessed the day when good fortune had guided Letty's steps to his office. He had not much of a practice, and the agency of an estate like Ellesmere meant a perfect windfall to him.

"There is one thing I wish to mention," he said, with some little embarrassment. "I observe you always sign yourself 'Lettice Rufford.' In future it will be necessary for you to take your proper name—Lettice Trelvelyan!"

And so it was as Miss Trelvelyan that our heroine—for, in spite of her pride and self-will, Letty is still our heroine—made her appearance at Ellesmere Grange.

Mr. Ferroll had been down there a few days before, and hastily got together a small staff of servants, and these stood drawn up in a double line in the hall when she alighted from the carriage that had been sent to the station to meet her.

She walked between them with her head well uplifted and with a firm footstep—though, in effect, her heart was beating almost to suffocation for all her self-possession exterior. She felt like one in a dream as she found herself entering Ellesmere Grange as its mistress—Ellesmere Grange, where the tragedy of her mother's life had been played, where Marcia's baby had been born, and where Hubert had reigned as master.

It was a depressing day outside: the grey autumnal skies hang low and leaden; damp mists rose from the fields, and the air was full of clinging moisture. At the best of times the Grange was not a cheerful place; but on a day like this it was absolutely repulsive.

"We bid you welcome home, miss!" said

the oldest and most respectable-looking of the women servants, coming forward and curtsying—as she had been told by Mr. Ferroll to do. He also had suggested this speech, and perhaps it was on that account that it sounded mechanical and parrot-like as if it had been a lesson.

Certainly there was no spontaneity in it, neither was there anything cordial in the expression of the other servants. As a matter of fact, they were all prejudiced against this new mistress, in spite of her youth and beauty. She was an interloper, they said, who had turned the rightful heir out of his home, and they were all sorry for the handsome young man whose place she had taken.

Mr. Ferroll stayed to afternoon tea, but he seemed less bright than usual, and a little later took his leave and drove back to the hotel at Stamford, where he was putting up. Thus Lettice was left alone, and no sooner had she heard the door close behind the solicitor than she wrapped herself up in a cloak, and determined to go outside into the grounds.

"If I stay here all by myself and do nothing but think I shall go mad," she muttered, as she let herself out, unobserved by the servants, who were all having tea in their own part of the building.

There was a small shrubbery to the left of the house, and thither she went, shivering a little as she stepped on the sodden carpet of fallen leaves that strewed the ground, and looked up through the bare boughs to the lead-coloured sky.

Suddenly she paused, for in the path before her, standing quite still, and looking at her fixedly, was Hubert Ellesmere.

Her first impulse was to turn back; but it seemed as if her strength had all in a minute deserted her. A mist swam before her eyes, and she feared she was going to fall. It was only by a supreme effort that she recovered herself.

"Let me pass, if you please!" she said, in a strange, cold voice, utterly unlike her own. At least, she told herself, he should not suspect how entirely his presence had unnerved her.

But Hubert did not move.

"No," he said, quietly; "I did not seek this meeting; but as fate has thrown us together once more I do not feel inclined to go away until I have exchanged a few words with you."

Thus they greeted each other, and only a few short weeks ago she had lain in his arms, while he rained kisses on her lips, her brow, her hair, and both had vowed a love that should live through all eternity!

Perhaps the remembrance of that last goodbye came to them while they stood there under the sombre skies, with the autumn mists about them, and a chill more deadly than autumn at their hearts.

"I never thought the time would come when we should meet like this," said Hubert, and there was a passion of regret in his voice.

"Lettice, Lettice, tell me I have been dreaming? Tell me you never meant that cruel letter you wrote to me! Tell me you love me still!"

He came nearer as he spoke, and held out his arms entreatingly. He had resolved beforehand that no such words as these should issue from his lips. She had treated him with a contumely and insult that he would not show to the vilest wretch in all the wide world, and his pride would not permit him to appeal against it!

Vain resolve! As he once more stood in her presence, with her lovely eyes looking upon him, and the spell of her beauty stronger than ever, the old love rose in his heart like a mighty torrent sweeping everything before it.

"Ah, darling! darling!" he cried, and he seized her forcibly in his arms, and pressed fierce kisses on her lips, "you have only been trying me all this time; but the ordeal has been a cruel one—how cruel you can

never know! You have humbled my pride into the very dust; but all the same, I love you; I cannot live without you! Take the estates, the money, everything, and I will be content if you will only give me yourself!"

For just a moment the force of his passion carried her away with it. The blood began to course through her veins with the old well-known rapture; every pulse in her body thrilled under the influence of his touch. She despised and scorned him; she had tried her very best to hate him; and yet all her efforts had been in vain, for his power over her was still almost irresistible.

Almost—not quite! We have sketched Letty's character very inadequately if the reader cannot guess that the girl's pride revolted against her own weakness. Even as Hubert's words of love fell on her ear the remembrance of Marcia came back to her, stinging her like a venomous reptile, and bringing with it a sharp pang of remorse, inasmuch as she had forgotten, even for a few seconds, her task of avenging her sister's wrongs.

Doubtless Hubert had murmured just such words as these in poor Marcia's ears during those first days of his courtship at Woodside. These very arms that now held Lettice had entwined Marcia. Those pleading eyes had told their eloquent tale just as passionately then as they did now!

With a sudden movement Lettice shook herself violently free from his embrace. She looked like a young tigress as she faced him from a little distance, her hands pressed against her heaving bosom, her splendid grey eyes flashing like incandescent jewels.

"How dare you insult me with your vows of love when I have already declared how distasteful they are to me?" she cried, pantingly, while Hubert fell back a few paces, utterly astounded by this sudden fury. "Did you not get my letter in which I told you that nothing would induce me to become your wife?"

"I got it—yes."

"Then why do you not abide by its contents?"

"Because I am a fool, I suppose," he returned, moodily. "Because I find it difficult even yet to believe that any woman could do it in her heart to be as perfidious as you have been."

"Perfidious—I?" she exclaimed. Then she broke into a bitter laugh. "At any rate, I have paid you back in your own coin."

"I do not understand you."

She said nothing, but the scorn in her eyes was absolutely scathing.

"At least," he said, "my love for you has never wavered."

"Because it is fresh and new. Other women perhaps could tell a different tale!"

His face flushed redly, then an idea seemed to strike him, and he exclaimed,—

"I think I am beginning to understand. Lady Alicia has been telling you—"

But he came to a full stop. It was difficult to put into words what Lady Alicia might have told her that could change her thus.

"Lady Alicia has told me nothing at all to your disadvantage," she returned, coolly.

"Then, in Heaven's name, what made you turn me off as you did?"

She did not answer. Should she tell him the truth now, at this moment? Alas! the thought of Marcia brought with it such exquisite pain, that she doubted whether she could mention her name without breaking down.

And so the golden opportunity passed, never again to return.

While she hesitated Hubert spoke once more.

"As for Ellesmere, you are welcome to it. I have enjoyed being a rich man for a little over twelve months, but I was a poor one for five-and-twenty years before that, and it is no special hardship to become a poor one again. I bear you no ill-will inasmuch as you have



["HOW DARE YOU INSULT ME WITH YOUR VOWS OF LOVE WHEN I HAVE ALREADY DECLARED HOW DISTASTEFUL THEY ARE TO ME!" SAID LETTIE, PANTINGLY.]

taken from me what I was taught to regard as my birthright."

There was a curious look in her eyes as she bent forward in her eagerness.

"But you loved Ellesmere?"

"Yes."

"And it pained you to give it up?"

"I confess it. And that's not for its intrinsic value, but rather because it was the cradle of my race. There have been Ellesmeres of Ellesmere since the days of the Plantagenets."

"So you told me once before, I remember."

"And now the name will die out. You have robbed me of everything worth living—my love, and my inheritance. Verily, you ought to be content with the evil you have wrought upon me!"

She winced involuntarily under the grim but terrible irony of his tone. Yes, it was true; she had indeed robbed him of what made life worth living. But it was right; it was just that this should be so, for had he not robbed Marcia of life itself?

Lettie said never a word. There is a point in endurance beyond which a woman cannot go, and she had almost reached that point.

The events of the day had been exciting in themselves, but this interview with the man round whom every fibre in her being had twined itself, tried her infinitely more.

Hubert watched her for a few moments, but there was no sign of yielding in this beautiful face. No mask carved in white marble could have been colder and more impassive. The very strain with which she contrived to keep her expression from betraying her lent her a certain hardness. And the young man sighed, as one sighs over a lost illusion.

Yes, he had made a mistake. This was not the sweet, coy, proud, and yet loving girl whom he had wooed. This was a beautiful imperious woman, who cared only for wealth and power, and trampled love under her feet.

Lettie turned to go. She dared not trust herself any longer.

"Wait!" he cried, imperiously. "If we part now, we do indeed part for all eternity; and before that happens I wish to hear from your own lips that you have fooled me as no man was ever fooled before. I want you to tell me that the paradise in which I dwelt before I took that ill-fated journey was a fool's paradise, wherein you had led me for the sake, not of myself, but of my money and position. I want to probe my folly to its utmost depths—just as a surgeon probes a wound before he cauterises it—and then I will go away, and pray to Heaven that I may look upon your face no more."

Lettie leaned against the green, rain-sodden trunk of a tree for support, while her breath came in quick gasps. Surely, no woman had ever been so tortured before! On the one side her debt to her dead sister, and the oath that she had sworn to avenge her; on the other, a passion which tore at her heart-strings like some fierce living creature. Oh, that she could forget Marcia ever existed, and throw herself on the breast of this man, whom she loved in despite of herself!

How handsome and noble and manly he looked standing there, with his blue eyes saddened, and his mouth set hard under the heavy chestnut moustache! It was difficult to believe that such foul treachery lurked beneath such a fair outside.

And yet even at that moment Lettie recalled how Marcia had lived, hidden away at the Grange, at the very time when her so-called husband was coming to Aldham Mount to woo her sister; and at the remembrances she gathered strength and resolve.

"Your prayer is one that I am quite ready to echo," she answered him, mockingly. "As to the past I will say nothing, but that I shall do my best to forget it. With the future—my future—you have nothing whatever to do. As you say, our parting is eternal."

Saying which, she turned and left him, walking swiftly back to the Grange, and disappearing in the massive shadow of its portals, while he stood watching her; and the rain that had threatened all the afternoon began to pour down in a fierce autumnal storm on his uncovered head.

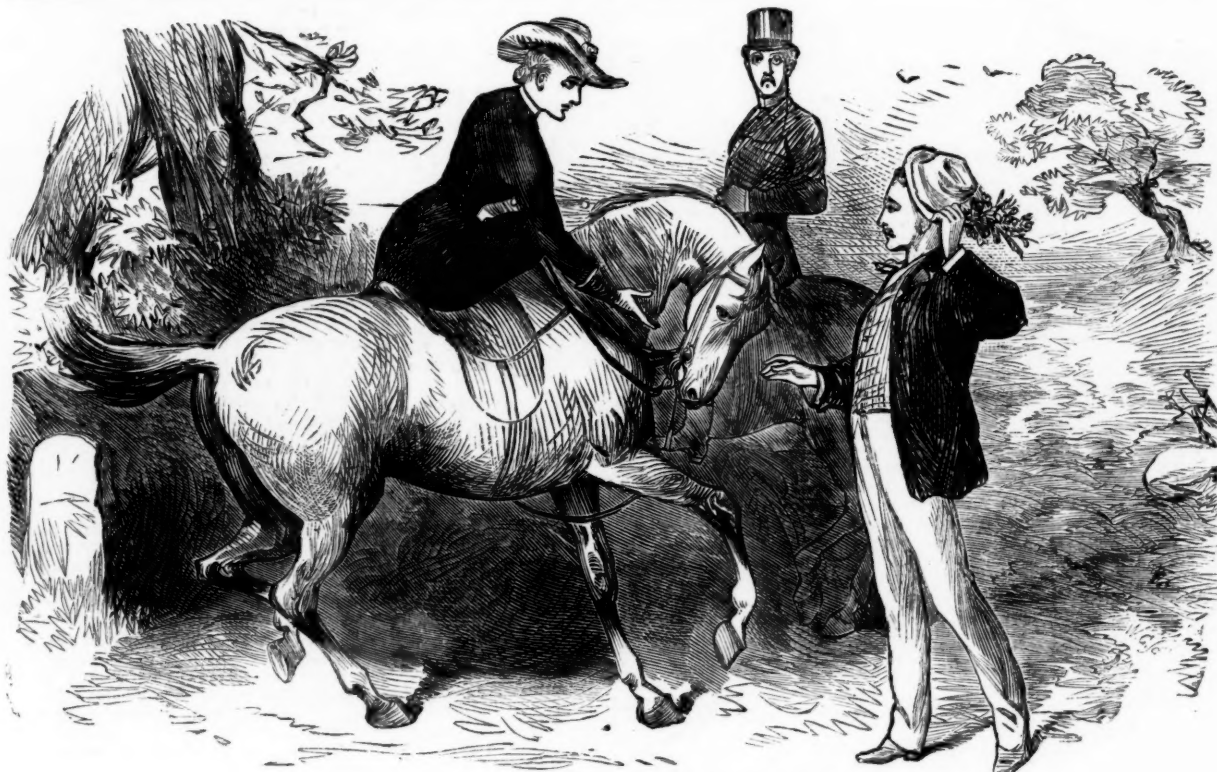
How long he stayed there he did not afterwards know; but when he left the dusk had fallen, and the storm was at its height. How the wind roared and shrieked through the shuddering trees, flinging the branches it had broken off far and wide, and sending showers of yellow leaves to join their brethren on the soddened paths!

But Hubert heeded it not—indeed, the fierce fury of the storm woke answering echoes in his own heart. It is hard to part with hope, and even up to this afternoon he had clung to the belief that after all there might be some hideous mistake in his relation with Lettie, even though she had claimed and taken possession of Ellesmere Grange. That he would have forgiven her—anything, everything he would have forgiven her if she had only loved him!

But she did not, and hope fled in despair.

(To be continued.)

In a paper read by a gentleman before the Bromley Naturalists' Society on the scientific measurement of children, he says he finds such measurements as he describes, taken every term, a good guide as to whether his pupils may be pressed with work or not. "If the increase is regular and the weight fair, according to the height, I do not fear to press them; but if, on the other hand, the weight is low, or if the height increases and not the weight, or if the increase in height is too rapid, I think it a very fair excuse for laziness and take great care that too much work is not expected from them."



[VERONICA REINED IN HER HORSE, AND BENDING DOWN, HELD OUT HER HAND TO RALPH.]

NOVELETTE.]

HIS ENEMY'S CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

"HAVE you heard the news, sir?" asked Dame Freke, as she brought in her master's mid-day meal. "The family have arrived at the Hall; leastways Mrs. and Miss Lynn have come, and a gentleman they call Lord Mansel. Folks do say he's going to marry Miss Lynn. They say, too, she's very lovely!"

Ralph Hastings looked up from his book. There was a heavy frown upon his brow, and his brown eyes were very sombre.

"They have come at last then," he said, in slow, measured tones, "all but the old man. Does his conscience keep him away? Has he a conscience?"

"Good lor, Mr. Ralph, no! lawyers don't indulge in them sort of luxuries. They wouldn't get on if they did," the woman said, with a short, hard laugh.

"Mr. Lynn is not a lawyer now, but a gentleman at leisure!"

"All the money in the world can't make him a gentleman," answered Freke, sharply, "the whited old sepulchre. Well, I've got one comfort anyhow, when he dies the devil will get his own. Mr. Ralph, I'm afraid my news has spoiled your dinner?"

"No. I am not hungry, that is all. I wonder what the girl is like, and if she knows the story of the past. She used to be a pretty child, and amiable," he added, musingly.

"Pooh!" said Freke, with huge disdain, "beauty's only skin deep, and she's bound to be evil, there's so much black blood in her veins. Mr. Ralph, you'll be a thorn in old Lawyer Lynn's side, living just at his gates; and I'm most afraid you'll find it bitter work seeing him lordling it about here."

"I shall not see much of him. You can go

now," and by way of dismissal he took up his book, and appeared engrossed with it until the woman had gone away.

Then with a gesture of infinite weariness and impatience he tossed it aside, and rising, looked from the diamond-paned window with sombre brooding eyes.

So they had returned—his enemies; those who had robbed him of his substance, who had made his father a suicide, and stolen strength and life slowly but surely from the mother he had worshipped.

He had been only twelve years old when it all happened (his enemy's daughter was but five then), now he was twenty five; but not one incident of the past had he forgotten.

He could remember how the shadow began to grow upon his father's face, how little by little the retinue of servants became less, and his mother practised small economies unknown before in the Hastings household.

And then the final crash, when weeping wildly, his mother told him he was no longer heir to the Hastings property; that they were all but beggared, and nothing remained to them but Lilac Cottage and a small pittance which had come to her from an old friend.

No one rightly understood how Squire Hastings's ruin came about, no one but Elias Lynn, his solicitor; but every one suspected roguery when he became owner of Hemel Feris Hall and all the lands adjoining.

Indeed, so strong was public feeling against him that he thought it advisable to travel for awhile. So on the night upon which his victim shot himself through the brain, he with his wife and child left for foreign parts.

That was thirteen years ago. The little Veronica was now a girl of eighteen, and Ralph found himself wondering what manner of creature she was.

His eyes rested upon gable and turret of the house he should have called his home, and a curse half rose to his lips as he thought of Elias Lynn being master there.

He looked round the apartment in which he stood. The ceiling was low, with time-darkened beams; the windows small and diamond paned, with roses and honeysuckle clambering around.

The cottage itself was pretty, but it boasted only five rooms and a studio. The garden was picturesque but small. It was just such a place as a farm bailiff might have rented comfortably, and with such a home the last of the Hastings was fain to be content.

He supplemented his small annuity by painting and poetry. He was a clever artist, and an inspired poet; but he only worked when the mood was upon him, his own wants and those of Dame Freke being very simple.

A strange, stern, taciturn young fellow; he could not meet his equals on their own level, he would not submit to patronage, and so it came about that he was very lonely and friendless.

Indeed, his only companions were his books and his violin, and he cared less than nothing for the criticisms of his neighbours; but Dame Freke had her master's dignity to support, and right royally she bore herself towards the new domestics up at the Hall.

"I'm half inclined to quit the place," he thought, moodily. "I shan't find living here too pleasant now the Lynns are home. I suppose that girl will be very lofty and patronising in her manner—until I have given her a salutary lesson!"

But he did not leave Hemel Feris after all. Living was cheap there, the house was his own, and he had a morbid sort of curiosity to look on these usurpers of his kingdom; and so he stayed; and it chanced that a week after her return Veronica Lynn drove by the Cottage with her mother.

It was just then at its loveliest; the roses, honeysuckle, and clematis were all in bloom; the jasmine and passion flowers made a veritable bowyer of the porch.

"What a pretty place!" said the girl. "Who lives there, mamma?"

Mrs. Lynn flushed uneasily.

"Mr. Hastings, I believe."

"Ralph Hastings, my old playmate? Is he so very poor?"

"I know nothing about him, and I am sure your father would not wish you to become acquainted with him," Mrs. Lynn said, nervously. "He, like his father, has been very unjust to us. He is smothered that the Hall has come to us. These old families are usually very improvident."

"I am sorry for Mr. Hastings," Veronica remarked, quietly. "One always pities a dejected king. It would be gall and wormwood to me, to see strangers in the home of my forefathers, supposing I had any. What a queer old woman!" as Freke came from the porch to the gate.

Mrs. Lynn recognised the old servant at once, and bowed in a condescending fashion; and then Veronica's face flushed crimson, as Freke with a scowl and a sneering smile, turned on her heel, and retraced her steps with her head well up.

"What an insolent woman, mamma!"

"She doubtless takes her tone from her master," the mother answered, but there was a cautious pallor on her usually florid cheeks, and a strained look about the mouth, which told of some great emotion. "I wish your father would come," she said, presently, "people here are prejudiced against us, because we are a new family. It will be hard to get into the best circle. Abroad it was different. However, Lord Mansel will be a most valuable ally. He is very pleasant, Veronica?" questioningly.

"Is he?" absently; she was looking somewhat intently at an advancing figure.

It was not remarkable for stature, being scarcely above the middle height; but there was a certain elasticity of gait, a dignified carriage of the well poised head, which made it remarkable. The face, too, was not to be lightly forgotten.

It was tall, with clean-cut features of a patrician caste; from under level dark brows looked out a pair of sombre brown eyes, and the firm mouth was slightly shaded by a dark moustache.

Instinct told Veronica who this man was, and as they drew nearer, she leaned a little forward, and bowed slightly. The bow was not returned. Ralph Hastings was too startled and surprised to render her the commonest courtesy.

This is what he saw as she whirled by, a pure proud face, surrounded by a halo of pale golden hair; blue eyes, calm, deep, and dark as a violet, and a perfect mouth with just a shade of pensiveness about it.

"She is pleased to be patronizing," he muttered, angrily to himself. "She would show me the kindness she would show a stray animal or a beggar; but she is very beautiful. Oh, yes, despite her pride and patronage, she is distinctly lovely."

He did not see her again until the following Sunday, and then only at church, where he was not a very frequent attendant. As he passed down the aisle many eyes followed him; wondering how he would comport himself under what must have been a great ordeal to one so proud as he.

Quite calmly, without the slightest change of colour, he took his place in the humble seat assigned to the owner of Lilac Cottage, which was situated directly before the cushioned and curtained pew occupied by the Hall people.

There was not the slightest hint of embarrassment in his look or manner, not the least little suggestion of the pain and rage consuming him.

Once he glanced towards Veronica, sitting pale and beautiful beside her mother. Their eyes met and his held hers a moment, whilst the quick blood rose to her cheeks, and it was only then that he released them. She did not glance up again throughout the service; but he who watched, saw that her proud com-

posure was broken through, and that little tremulous lights and shadows flitted across her face.

Lord Mansel sat beside her, and, remembering the rumour concerning their engagement, Ralph thought she deserved a better partner in life. The young lord's face was not only weak, but had a decidedly vicious tendency, and the low, receding brow gave evidence as to the small amount of intellect possessed by him.

"But," he thought, cynically, "his title covers a multitude of sins; and I don't suppose she has a heart to bestow on any man. With such parents, how should she have?"

Coming out of church, the hem of her garments brushed against him. She looked deprecatingly at him, half believing his discourtesy of the previous meeting had been intentional; and when he bowed gravely and coldly, she smiled faintly as she passed on with her companions.

A handsomely appointed carriage was waiting them, and Ralph Hastings walked home through the cloud of dust it raised. Truly, things had been reversed between them, since he had petted and played with her in the years gone by.

He was unusually quiet and self-absorbed all through the day, and Freke said angrily to herself,

"It's all on account of them peaky Lynns. I wish the old place might burn to the ground, rather than see them living there, drag' em!"

Even Veronica's beauty could not soften the faithful heart, which had bled so long ago with her mistress's woes, and which held her son as dear as though Heaven had given him to her for her very own.

And so it chanced, that when Miss Lynn halted once at the Cottage gate to speak to her, she put on her most aggressive manner, and prepared for war.

"I was so young when I went away," said Veronica smiling, "that I did not remember you when I saw you here first."

"That's likely you would," snapped Freke, "folks look different in different settings. When you saw me last my master's family were in their right place up at the Hall."

The girl flushed painfully.

"You must try not to bear malice against me, that my father prospered whilst Mr. Hastings failed. I am sure it is our earnest wish to earn his son's friendship."

"My master," cried Freke, violently, "don't associate with none but his equals—a rascally lawyer is poison to him!"

Veronica drew herself to her full height—and she was tall.

"You do not reflect credit upon your master, when you so coarsely insult those who were once his friends!" she said, icily, and passed on, leaving Freke not quite sure who had won the victory.

Down the road went Miss Lynn, her face pale with strong emotion, and an angry light deepening the blue of her eyes.

"It must be his fault," she thought, "he must have imbued her with his own prejudices. It is neither fair nor manly," and then, all in a moment, the object of her thoughts was close beside her. Urged by some strange impulse Ralph put out his hand.

"I have not had an opportunity of renewing our acquaintance before," he said, with a smile which transfigured all his face. "May I do so now, Miss Lynn?"

"I thought you did not desire to do so!" she answered, slowly.

"You mean because I failed to return your greeting the other day. I believe I was too startled to do so. I hardly recognised you either—when last I saw you, you were a wee mite in a white frock and blue sash!"

"And you could not trace the child in the woman? I will be frank and say I thought you did not desire to know us—people here seem to have a great prejudice against us; perhaps (a little sadly) it is natural, but it is

not pleasant, Mr. Hastings. When are you coming to see us?"

His face clouded in a moment, and she was sorry she had asked the question.

"Not ever I think," he answered, "I could not figure as a guest in the house where I should be host; and I and society have parted this long while."

"But why?" she urged, "poverty is not a crime," and the calm, frank eyes met his fully. "It is not for what you have, but for what you are that men value you."

He smiled sarcastically.

"Is that your experience—it is very wide of the mark, I am afraid; at all events I prefer not putting it to the test—Mr. Lynn has not returned?"

"No; but we are expecting him daily. Mr. Hastings will you try to think that for the sake of old days, I am your friend, so far as you will allow me to be?"

"You are very good," he said, coldly, and chilled by his manner, she bade him a hasty and somewhat frigid farewell, and went a little sorrowfully upon her way.

CHAPTER II.

After this they met frequently by chance, and sometimes Ralph, being in his happier and less suspicious moods would talk so well and with such pleasant, delicate humour, that the girl's heart warmed towards him; but there were others when he would merely exchange a cold greeting, and go on his way, as though she were less to him than the poorest peasant he met by the road.

She tried to resent this conduct, for she was proud, and after an unsatisfactory meeting, would say to herself,—"I will not suffer his caprices. From to day we will be only casual acquaintances;" and yet at a smile from him her anger would die out, and she became conscious of his great and growing power over her. Frequently he saw her riding or walking with Lord Mansel, and he said, violently,

"She will marry him, although in her heart she loathes him—and why should I care; she is my enemy's daughter!"

His enemy's daughter, yes, and at first he had tried to regard her as a personal foe, only this was impossible; and now, when he thought of her, when he lingered a moment beside her, a strange, vague unrest possessed him, which he would not seek to analyse.

In due time Mr. Lynn arrived at Hemel Ferie, and then preparations went on manfully for the grand opening ball to which all the élite of the county were invited. Lord Mansel's influence had been brought to bear upon those few who at first meditated a refusal, and Mrs. Lynn's heart swelled with pride, as she glanced over acceptance after acceptance.

"Shall I ask Ralph Hastings?" she said, glancing towards her husband, "Won't it look strange if he is not present?"

"I don't care how it looks," answered Mr. Lynn, quickly, "it would be madness to invite him—a death's head at a feast! And the fellow is insolent too—out me as completely as though I were the pauper, and he the master of the Hall!"

"Perhaps," said Veronica, gently, "he cannot yet calmly think of another filling his rightful place!"

"What do you mean, miss by 'his rightful place'?" wrathfully.

"Why, I suppose it old Mr. Hastings had not been extravagant or imprudent, his son would have succeeded him here?"

Mr. Lynn's face looked grey and worn, as he answered fretfully,

"Am I to blame for his improvidence? Why should I let this very desirable property slide, just because it once had been my client's? Young Hastings is a proud fool—and look here, Veronica, I don't intend that you and he should be even acquaintances—you understand?"

"Not quite. Do you mean, father, I am not to exchange the merest courtesies with him?"

"That is precisely my meaning; and I expect implicit obedience."

"I am afraid I cannot obey you to such an extent," the girl said, respectfully and firmly. "As a gentleman, Mr. Hastings has a claim upon our courtesy, being unfortunate he has my sympathy;" and then, before her father could give utterance to the angry reply which rose to his lips, Wolfe Mansel entered the room, and so the subject dropped.

But Mr. Lynn could not have chosen a better method to keep Ralph present in his daughter's mind.

"He is far and away the cleverest man I know." He has all the refinement of thought and bearing my lord so sorely lacks. Why does my father so hate him? It is almost as though he had done him some wrong."

Then she went to dress for her ride, and even the ex-lawyer felt a thrill of pride in her beauty when she came down again.

Few girls looked so well in a habit as Veronica Lynn, or could manage it so gracefully. She had not adopted the hideous short skirts, and as she stood tall and slender beside Lord Mansel she made him shrink into insignificance of which he was happily unconscious.

Her habit was dark green, and admirably calculated to enhance the purity of her skin, the sheen of her pale gold hair. She wore a Rubens hat of the same shade, with feathers softening its outline and the contour of her features.

It was a proud face, it was pure and generous, and looking from father to daughter one wondered how she became possessed of such grand, frank eyes.

"You do not join us, father?" she asked, a shade of annoyance upon her face and in her voice.

"No. I have business of importance to which I must attend; but his lordship will take all possible care of you. Good-bye, my dear. I hope you will have a pleasant time," and he stood watching a moment as she rode away, then turning to Mrs. Lynn, said, "She will wear her title and honours well, Maria. She looks every inch 'my lady!'"

"I wish," remarked the lady, "that her were not quite so insignificant and foolish. I don't believe Veronica will accept him!"

"What! She shall. It is my will, and you know when I have once resolved upon a thing I never turn aside from my purpose."

"I know; but I should like to know our daughter loved her husband. I do not think Mansel will make her happy."

"At your time of life," Mr. Lynn said, sneeringly, "you should have outgrown sentiment; and I will not have my plans spoiled."

"I should not venture to interfere with them. But I have some right to an opinion."

"Certainly, so long as you do not act it; and with a short, dry laugh Elias Lynn went to his study to go through and correct his accounts, whilst his wife dawdled over some fine work, turned the leaves of the newest novel, and felt inexpressibly bored.

Along the pleasant road went Veronica and her cavalier, she unusually silent, he talking in a rapid fashion which always angered her. But her face gave no sign of her feeling. It was like a marble mask its pale repose. But suddenly a faint glew flushed the curved cheeks and a light came into the beautiful eyes as Ralph Hastings came in view.

He would have passed her with a bow, but this Veronica would not permit. He should not think she preferred the young lord's friendship and society to his. So she reined in her horse, and bending down, held out her slender hand to him.

"You have been on one of your long rambles?" she said, with a smile and a glance at the wild flowers he carried. "You put us quite to shame with your early hours."

"I have had the cream of the day," he answered, retaining her hand a moment. "If

you want to see the world at its best, you've got to rise early. But I am detaining you. Lord Mansel is growing visibly impatient, for the young man had walked his horse to a little distance, and was regarding them frowningly.

"Shall I introduce you, Mr. Hastings?"

"No, thank you, it is an honour I do not covet," sarcastically, and Veronica laughed, softly.

"I shall not tell him that, he might not regard you too favourably after. Mr. Hastings, I am going to take a very great liberty with you. I want you to promise that you will visit at the few nice houses round here—I do not speak of ours," sadly—"it would be better and happier for you in every way. And now I am going to say good-bye before you have time to scold me for my presumption," and with another smile she was gone.

"Why do you show that sad such favour?" demanded Lord Mansel.

She turned her eyes upon him, like her face, they were proud and cold.

"Of whom were you speaking?" she asked, icily.

"Why, of that fellow, Hastings. He hasn't a soul with which to bless himself!"

"And that constitutes your idea of a 'cad'? Unfortunately, Mr. Hastings is poor, but poverty cannot rob him of his birth or breeding. When we Lynns were sons of the soil, and your family quite a new one, the Hastings were an old, an honourable people even then."

"Their pedigree seems to interest you. Really, Miss Lynn, I object to such warm defence of them from you," he said, sullenly.

"And why? You have no right of control over my words or actions!"

"Then give me the right."

But Veronica was flying over the wide moor, and as he started in pursuit of her, he uttered a very ugly oath.

"By Jove!" he thought, as his swift horse followed hers, that was so much more swift, "I'll break her pride yet. I don't believe she knows the truth about old Lynn. I hold that as a trump card, and if she refuses to hear me when I plead, I'll tell her what she is, and how the old man came by his money. She'll be glad to have me then!"

And now Veronica turned her horse's head and came to meet him.

"What a glorious race," she said, and before her smile his anger vanished.

She was so lovely; what wonder that she was hard to woo. Of course she knew her own value, as any beautiful woman does.

Well, he would not speak of his hopes or wishes until a more favourable opportunity; for once in his life he would exercise patience. So he did his best to be bright and amusing, and succeeded in being less offensive than usual, for which Veronica was devoutly thankful.

The ball took place that night, and Elias Lynn had spared no expense to make it a success. He gave no sign of chagrin as the guests treated him with chill courtesy, and his wife with galling condescension.

He, at least, had the satisfaction of knowing that not one girl in the room could compare with Veronica in loveliness, and gracious ways. No fear that she would suffer either slight or patronage need cross his mind, and he smiled as he heard one dowager say to another,—

"What a lovely creature Miss Lynn is. How did such parents have such a child? She is going to marry Mansel, I suppose?"

"I hear so, but nothing is settled yet, and with her beauty and wealth she might do still better. Class distinctions are not so clearly defined as they used to be."

"No," with a laugh, "the mighty dollar is powerful to remove them. See, Miss Lynn is dancing with Morecombe now. How very graceful her movements are."

Foiled and flattered by all, Veronica held on her way that evening, but she was utterly

weary of the music and laughter, the "twinkling of feet" upon the polished floor.

It seemed to her that all her partners were alike, all discussed the same subjects in the same languid, unintellectual way, all paid the same fulsome compliments, and she was very glad to seize the chance afforded her of escape from the brilliant room.

Stepping out upon the terrace, she went rapidly towards a sequestered part of the gardens. The night was divine, she wanted to be alone, and to understand her own mood.

She was conscious that had Ralph Hastings been present, all would have been different, and a hot, shamed flush rose to her face. He was less than nothing to her. How could she let her thoughts so stray to him? And then she gave utterance to a little, low cry, because there before her, as though brought by magic, stood Ralph.

"I ought to beg your pardon for my intrusion," he said, quickly. "I know I am trespassing. But as I walked up the road, I heard the band playing a favourite waltz of mine. Music had always a wonderful attraction for me, and I came into the grounds to hear the better. Then too, I think, I hoped to see you in all the glory of your ball dress!"

She was trembling with some new feeling which might have been happiness, but which still had an element of pain in it, and her voice was not quite steady as she answered,—

"I am glad you came. It was so hot in there, and the voices and music were getting inextricably mingled in my brain. I thought I would get a little quiet here. What a lovely night it is!" lifting lustrous eyes to the starlit sky.

"Yes," he assented, but it was her beauty that rivetted his gaze.

She wore white, without a fleck of colour; there were pearls in her hair, about her throat and wrists. And as she stood revealed in all her girlish loveliness, in all her purity and grace, Ralph's heart beat with sudden wild emotion. But he was not a man to wear it upon his sleeve, and now he said, quietly,—

"Will not you take cold? You have no wrap."

"I need none, the night is so warm, and I am exceptionally strong."

"But you will certainly be missed."

"I am going in soon," with a little sigh, "but I would rather remain here."

"Miss Lynn, I have been thinking over the advice you gave me this morning. Would it please you if I acted upon it?"

"Indeed, it would," earnestly, "it can never be right to hide one's talents, or to let them rust through disuse. If in any way I move you to action on your own behalf, I shall be proud and glad beyond measure."

"Thank you. I will try to merit your interest and approval;" then, after a little awkward pause, "Miss Lynn, try not to think me impatient, but people are saying you are to marry Lord Mansel. Is it true?"

The beautiful eyes met his fully.

"It is not true."

"But it is your father's will, and his will is usually law."

"Usually, not always. There is a limit even to a daughter's obedience, and I will not go beyond that."

"I am glad, for you deserve a better fate; but Mr. Lynn is a stern man, and may find means to compel your obedience."

She sighed.

"If only he knew how much more amenable I am to kindness than to harshness," she said, "I might fear his persuasions; but strange and cruel as it seems, he does not love me. I hardly think mamma does either; but she is kind to me, and proud of me. Oh, no, Mr. Hastings, I shall never marry Lord Mansel. He fills me only with a loathing. Hark, they are calling me. I must go, good-night, good-bye."

A moment he held her hand, and looked earnestly into her lovely face, then he bent his head and kissed her finger tips. Then she was gone, fading like a shadow among the

trees and shrubs, and he set his face towards home.

His enemy's daughter! What had he to do with her? What was it her eyes said as they looked into his? What was it his soul cried out to him daily and hourly? Had it come to that? Did he love her; he, the poor artist, she, the beautiful heiress?

Yes, the truth was all revealed to him in its nakedness. That heart of his had gone from him into Veronica's keeping, and he knew that time nor chance could change or chill its deep and loyal love.

"I am a fool," he said, bitterly. "I am a fool! Why must I love her, and not another woman? What can she ever be to me or I to her? It would be better to go away, never to see her face again, and so in some way win content. If she could care for me, I would labour year in and year out for her—if she could care! Ah! what a fool I am to dream of such a blessed possibility."

CHAPTER III.

"THIS is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Lynn. I thought I was the only one, who cared to visit this lonely spot," said Ralph, as their hands met in greeting. "In fact, this little bit of a ruin has a bad name, and not all its beauty or the loveliness of the situation can make it popular."

"I am glad," answered Veronica, smiling. "I don't care for popular resorts, or the people one meets at them. But I am sorry I have disturbed you; let me go away, your book will be better company than I."

"There may be two opinions as to that; see, I have found you a pleasant seat, why should we not do our best to make each other happy. Now I am yours to command, of what shall we talk?"

"We will not talk, if you please; but you may read to me, if you will. Even the cover of your book looks promising."

"It is one of Rossetti's. You told me the other day, you were passionately fond of good poetry. If you haven't read this volume you must. Now for the present I will give you 'With Staff and Scrip,' and so he read of the Pilgrim Knight, who made Queen Blanchely's cause his own; of her pleading that he would not risk his life in so vain an endeavour; of her final yielding to his entreaties, of their growing love for each other, and then of her gifts to him of sword and banner and shield.

And as the mellow voice rose and fell instinct with feeling, the colour came and went in Veronica's face, and all her heart was stirred within her.

He read of the Queen's vigils whilst the fight went on, of her agony of suspense, of the shouts of victory, and then of the silent form brought home beneath the conquering boughs of the Queen's wild cry,—

"Uncover ye his face, she said.

O changed in little space!

She cried, O pale that was so red,

O God! O God of grace!

Cover his face!

Of her long wasting and weeping, and finally of her death, and as his voice died out, and his eyes rose to hers, he saw that they were wet with tears, of which she was more than half ashamed.

"Take the book and read it at your leisure, Veronica," and as he held it towards her, their hands touched. He took and held hers fast. "Veronica," he said again, and her face drooped low until it rested on their clasped fingers.

"Yes," she whispered back, and waited.

"You know all that I am, and all that I have. I am a poor enough suitor for you, but I love you. Although I have fought against my love it is too strong for me. My queen, my queen, what will you say to me?"

She lifted her gaze to his, not ashamed then

or weak, but with the proud and happy light in her grand eyes, and the glory of a first love on her face.

"I love you, dear!" she said, simply, "I love you with all my heart!"

And yet he did not take her to his breast, but held her a little from him whilst he looked searchingly into her eyes.

"Count well the cost now. If once I call you mine, I cannot bear to let you go again; and you know well that your people will be furious. Can you brave their anger for my sake?"

Her face was white, but steady.

"I can brave anything for you!"

"Can you bear three years of persistent reproaches and ill-treatment? These things may be your portion if you cleave to me. You are only eighteen, the law gives your father absolute control over you until your majority. And even at the close of that time I can give you none of those luxuries to which you have so long been accustomed. Do you love me well enough to suffer all these things for my sake?"

"Try me, trust me," she answered, earnestly, "through good report and ill, through poverty or wealth I will love you still the same!"

And then she was safe in his arms, and with his kisses warm upon her lips, she forgot all fear of the future, all dread of her father's anger, and only felt in her heart she was blessed above all women.

Like all proud and generous natures, when she surrendered, she surrendered wholly. She did not stint her lover of his rights, and gave him there kiss for kiss, answering a fond word with fond word, and the glory of the summer day was all around and about them.

But it cast a shadow over Veronica when, as they turned to leave the ruins, Ralph said,—

"I must see your father, sweetheart. Shall it be to-night?"

"No," she answered, quickly. "Let us have one day of unalloyed happiness; to-morrow will be soon enough; and, oh, my dear! my dear! for my sake be patient with him, even though he may be very angry, and I fear he will!"

Patient with Elias Lynn! The thought was gall and wormwood to him, but for Veronica's sake he would try to remember only that he was her father.

"He will naturally be angry," he said, gravely, "because you are refusing what the world would call a very brilliant alliance, for the sake of one who has nothing but a loyal love, and an ancient, honourable name to offer. There will not be a few to accuse me of fortune-hunting."

She broke in quickly.

"For the opinion of the few who do not know you, you need not care. What would it matter if all the world shared it since I know you love me for myself alone, and not for any thing I may have!"

"I know that," he answers, holding her hands fast. "I know you, Veronica, as you are in all your truth and love, and I am filled with a great wonder that you should have given me the great treasure of your heart. No matter what chance or change may come to separate us, I shall always feel secure in your faith."

"Thank you," she said, very gently. "I am honoured by your trust, and I will deserve it;" and then in a little secluded spot by the wayside they parted, each to walk home in a happy dream, which could have nothing but a rude awakening.

Mrs. Freke met her master with an anxious face and vexed eyes. She so hovered about him as she ministered to his needs, that something in her manner finally attracted his attention, and he turned kindly to her.

"What is the matter, Freke?" he asked.

"You are looking troubled."

"And that is what I am, sir; and I won't be able to rest till I've got this thing off my mind. Of course, I don't believe all the

gossips choose to say, or listen to it either; but, oh! Mr. Ralph, forgive my curiosity, but is it true you are often about with Miss Lynn?"

His face flushed darkly.

"It is quite true, Freke. What of that?"

"Oh!" she cried, in greatest agitation, "don't go to say you're getting to care for her. What good can it do you? and old Lynn 'uld never give you his daughter, Mr. Ralph!"

"Hush!" he said, sternly. "Miss Lynn has promised to be my wife!"

Her hands fell to her sides, and she stared at him like one demented.

"Master, have you gone mad? How can you put any faith in her?" She'll bring you nothing but trouble and shame. Can you bring a dove from an eagle's nest? Can she be her father's daughter without her father's nature?"

"Silence!" Ralph said, sternly, "to none but you would I have listened so long. I am proud to know one day Miss Lynn will be my honoured wife. Heaven grant the day may come soon!"

"And Heaven forgive and refuse to hear your prayer!" cried the old woman, carried out of herself. "Why will you court certain sorrow? Oh, Master Ralph! Master Ralph! forgive me, it is my love for you and for the dead and gone that makes me speak! How can you take to wife the daughter of your father's foe? He killed your father as surely as though he fired that fatal shot. He robbed you of house and lands, and sent your mother to an untimely grave. Say, if he would give you his child, could you, knowing all these things, be content to clasp hands with the thief and murderer?"

"Hush!" answered the young man, in a low voice, "I cannot hear you. I am bound to Miss Lynn by every tie of love and honour. I would not go back if I could!"

"Then you must 'gang your own gait,' and may I never live to see the day when you repent it," and sobbing as though her heart would break, Dame Freke went out, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

As may be imagined Ralph's thoughts were not very pleasant ones, and do what he would the faithful old servant's words would ring in his ears through all that lifelong night.

In the morning he rose haggard and unfreshed, and having made a farce of breakfasting, set out for the Hall.

The servant who opened the door to him, looked the surprise he felt, when he saw who was the early visitor, and having ushered him into the study went away to find his master.

The study itself had not been altered, and Ralph felt sick at heart as he noted each familiar object in the room, and remembered where last he had seen his father seated, and the faint smile that had parted his lips as he looked up to see his boy standing in the open doorway.

But he had not long for reflection; a quick, shuffling tread was heard outside, and the next moment a man with grey hair and beard, and keen, shifting black eyes stood before him.

He did not lift his gaze to the young man's, but said, in a quick, jerky voice,—

"Honoured by your visit I am sure, Mr. Hastings; but I shall be glad if you will be as brief as possible with the explanation of it. I have a great deal of business on hand just now."

"I have come," said Ralph, slowly and deliberately, "to ask you for your daughter!"

"What!" cried the other, bringing his eyes to bear a moment on the haughty face before him. "Say that again!"

"I repeat, sir, that with your consent I would make Miss Lynn my wife."

"A very modest ambition too. What if I refuse my consent?"

"I will marry her without," coolly. "She and I can wait."

"Do you mean to tell me you have her permission to speak?"

"I do. Miss Lynn has been pleased to accept me as her suitor."

"You beggarly hound!" shouted Lynn. "You think I will give my daughter to an idle pauper? You think I do not see through your artifice to win back the place your fool of a father lost!"

"Go softly," interrupted Ralph, in a very low voice. "Go softly, I am only human, and I owe you a heavy debt. Give me yes or no?"

"No!" the other almost shrieked, "a thousand times no! You have nothing to give her, you have barely enough to purchase bread and cheese for yourself, and she has everything the heart can desire. I can give her wealth, position."

"But not a clean name, and that counts for something," said Ralph, in his most level tones. "It is hard she should suffer for her father's little peccadilloes. Lynn, I ask nothing of you, I would not touch a farthing of the hoard won as you alone know how. Give me Veronica, and keep your wealth!"

And then, being in a fury, Lynn snatched up a heavy ruler that lay upon the table, and struck at Ralph, but the young man was too quick for him. Catching him by the wrist, he wrested the ruler from him, and they two stood glaring each into the other's eyes a moment, whilst Ralph said,—

"But that you are an old man, and her father, I would thrash you within an inch of your life. As it is," and here he flung the weapon from the open window, "I will shake you as a dog would shake a rat;" and lifting him by the collar of his coat, he set to work in such real earnest, that Elias Lynn's teeth fairly chattered.

Then, with a gesture of disgust, he flung him aside, and turning, let himself out of the house.

Lynn dragged himself erect, and walking to the window, watched his slowly retreating figure with a savage scowl.

"You would have my daughter would you," he hissed. "I would rather see her dead than your wife. I don't easily forget an insult, and you shall pay dearly for this."

Then, he rang the bell, and gave orders that Veronica should go to him at once. She came, paler than usual, with a faint compression about the mouth, but her eyes were steady and her manner calm.

"You sent for me father?"

"Yes," he said, trying to speak as calmly as she. "I have just had an audience with Hastings, and the communication he made, surprised me not a little. Is it, or is it not true that you have degraded yourself by encouraging his pretensions and listening to his suit?"

"I fail to see the degradation, father. Mr. Hastings is in reality my superior, and I have promised to marry him!"

The perfect calmness of her manner held him quiet a moment; but then his fury broke out in a perfect torrent of oaths and abuse, under which the girl shrank and shuddered, feeling acutest shame for him who was beyond self shame. Then with a sudden change of manner, he approached her.

"Look here, Veronica, you are too sensible to go through with this nonsense, and too good a daughter to defy my wishes and frustrate my plans. Send Hastings to the right about. He has scarcely a penny of his own, and I swear, if you run counter to my wishes, you shall never touch a penny of mine. Lord Mansel has proposed for you, and I have given him permission to address you. See that you answer wisely."

The grand, calm eyes (so like the mother's he always strove to forget, because he had been an evil son to her) met his.

"When his lordship seeks an interview, I shall grant it, because in justice to him, I must make my meaning plain. And it is this: If need be to wait until my promised husband can lawfully claim me, and then to share with him all the joys and sorrows of

his life. In this one thing I must listen to my heart."

The man laughed brutally.

"You say so now, but you will sing another song long before the three years of your minority have expired. For the rest, if I learn that at any future time you exchange any word or correspondence with your beggarly lover, I will take such revenge upon you both as shall darken all your lives. Now go, girl. And if you answer Mansel perversely, I—" he paused, and lifted his hand as though to strike her.

But she never flinched, she never removed her calm eyes from his face, and as his arm dropped to his side, he turned away, unable to bear her intent scrutiny.

Slowly she went to her room, and looking the door behind her, fell upon her knees, and there, with bowed head, prayed that Heaven would keep her faithful, and help her to bear the burden of her life, until the day came when Ralph might without fear or danger call her wife!

CHAPTER IV.

Two days later, Wolfe Mansel found his long looked for opportunity. Veronica had gone to the greenhouses, and he followed. As he entered, and she saw his face, she guessed what was his intention, and did not seek to avoid him.

Perhaps she hoped by appealing to his manhood, and confiding her story to him, she could prevail upon him to cease all pursuit of her. She hardly understood his nature yet.

"What are you doing?" he asked, coming to her side.

"Getting flowers for the table. I think I have enough now. I verily believe the gardeners regard me with hatred, I so rifle the plants of their best blooms."

"I'll be bound that to a man they adore you," he said, with his usual coarse flattery. "You have much to answer for," and then he tried to take her hand, but she drew back too quickly, and but for the vanity that blinded him, he might have spared himself some humiliation, and her much pain.

"I've been trying for this *à la tête* for days, but you—oh, you have a heart of stone, and have purposely postponed hearing what you know I was dying to say. Veronica, I love you! Give me your hand, darling, and tell me you will be my wife!"

"Hear me," she said, with an entreating gesture, "and then you will understand how impossible it is for me to listen to you. I am already engaged to marry a man I love with all my heart."

"It's a lie!" he broke out fiercely. "Oh, I say, forgive me, I did not quite mean that, but you bowled me over so completely with your nonsense—of course it is nonsense, or Lynn would have told me—someone would certainly have told me."

"It is a very recent engagement," Veronica said, quietly, "and my father does not at all approve, in fact, he utterly forbids it. So I appeal to you, by your manhood, and the love you profess for me, to withdraw these attentions, which I have never encouraged, and which, forgive me, have always been distasteful to me! If I do not marry the man who holds my heart, thus, in the hollow of his hand—I will marry no other!"

He looked at her darkly.

"Who is this fellow; or are you ashamed to name him?"

She reared her head high.

"His name is Ralph Hastings!"

"That beggar!" he said, passionately, "by Heaven, I might have guessed it! I wish you joy of your choice—but at the same time I hardly wonder old Lynn don't see things with your eyes. And do you think for an instant I will yield to him, what is mine by right of your father's promise, I am not such a fool, and in a few weeks you'll be the first to laugh over your folly, I could buy

Hastings up a hundred times over and never feel it—and I should like to know how he intends to support you. See!" and he caught her hands so suddenly and violently that the flowers they held fell to the ground. "See, Veronica, I give you three days in which to reconsider your decision, and, if your answer is still unfavourable, I have a story to tell you which will make you only too ready to accede to my wishes, and show you the utter impossibility of a marriage with Hastings. Be reasonable, and I will spare you any shame or pain I have power to inflict, otherwise—"

"Pray spare your threats, they do not alarm me; and nothing you can say can affect my relationship to Mr. Hastings, or make me stoop to wed a man I so utterly despise as you. Loose my hands and let me go—you have had your answer!"

"Not my final answer," he retorted, allowing her to pass; and without another word she went out into the sunshine, his eyes following her savagely. "My lady! my lady!" he said, under his breath. "I would marry you to-morrow, if I knew you would kill me before a week had gone—it would be such a sweet revenge upon you for your pride and disdain."

Veronica did not attach any importance to Lord Mansel's threats and ravings. To her he seemed almost below contempt; so she went her way as serenely as she could with the clouds so dark between her and her heart's dear love. But the day was not destined to end calmly. In the evening her father sent for her, and one glance at his angry face was sufficient to tell her what sort of interview she might expect.

"What is this that Mansel tells me?" he began in an ominously quiet tone.

Her heart beat fast against her side, but she asked, steadily,—

"Will you please explain, papa?"

"There is small need of explanation. You know what it was he had to say—where is the use of evasion. This morning he did you the honour to offer you his ancient and reputable name—and you not only refused, but were mad enough to boast of your absurd infatuation. Most men would have been too thoroughly disgusted to urge their suit after such a disclosure. Mansel proves his love for you, by giving you yet another chance—you have three days in which to decide."

"If," said Veronica, solemnly, "if he gave me three years for reflection, my answer would be still the same. Father, I am your only child, and parents naturally desire the happiness of their children. Surely, oh, surely, you would not have me marry into certain misery! I loathe and despise Lord Mansel—and loathing and despising him, how can I keep the vows I should make to him before his Heaven."

Lynn burst into a brutal laugh.

"At eighteen one dreams of love and its attendant follies; at twenty eight one scoffs at them, and realises that wealth and position are the only good things on earth. And who expects a woman of fashion to care for the man whose name she bears? Mansel is not worse than other men, the Galahads exist only in fancy—so remember that when your lover comes for his answer, it must be 'yes.'"

"It never can be that, papa! In all things else I will obey you—no threats and no persuasions can alter my resolve. Please let us say no more upon the subject!"

He had been riding, and his whip was still in his hand. In an access of fury he lifted it, and struck her once across the shoulder. She started, quivered through every limb, but did not cry out, did not seek safety in flight—and her very courage angered him the more.

Again the blow fell—this time she did not even shrink; but her face was white, and from out its whiteness her eyes gleamed fiercely. A third time the whip descended, but it struck her cheek now, and left its hideous mark there—perhaps that, more than anything,

recalled Lynn to his senses. He flung the whip aside.

"You know now," he said, hoarsely, not daring to look at that proud, indignant face. "You know now, what it is to thwart or offend me. If you are wise, you will remember the lesson I have given you, and not force me to repeat it."

"I shall remember it all my life," she said, in a low, hard voice. "It is not one to be easily forgotten. May I go now?"

"Go! yes; and keep to your room until Saturday. You will give Mansel your decision then. See it accords with my wishes."

Quietly, slowly Veronica left his presence; but when the door had closed behind her she flew upstairs, and snatching up a dark hood and cloak, escaped unseen from the house.

Her proud heart was aching with grief and shame at the cruel indignity she had suffered. Her brain seemed to reel, and the pain resulting from the blows she had received was excessive.

She would turn her back upon home for ever. She had little to regret. Her father had never loved her, her mother never lavished any tenderness upon her. Why should she return? There was only one being in the world whose happiness she made, and to him she would go.

She ran like a wild thing through the gardens and the park. She was not afraid now of the darkness and solitude, being carried out of herself by her wrongs and her woes.

On she went, out upon the lonely road, never pausing until she had reached the door of Lilac Cottage. Then she tapped timidly, and Ralph himself opened the door to her.

"Veronica!" he cried, in amazement, and she, stretching out her hands to him, wailed,—
"Take me in, Ralph. I have left home for ever!"

Without a word he drew her into the tiny hall and from thence to his studio, where a lamp shed a soft, subdued light.

"My darling," he said, "what has happened? There—wait one moment whilst I get you wine. Then, when you have rested a moment, you will be better able to tell me."

"Do not leave me," she entreated, as he was going out. "I want nothing only to be near you, to feel that I am safe in your keeping. Oh, Ralph! oh, Ralph! there is no one left me now but you!" and a little tearless sob broke from her lips.

He bent solicitously over her.

"Tell me all," he said, forcing himself to speak calmly for her sake, and with gentle hands he untied the ribbons that fastened her hood.

As it slipped back he saw that livid mark across the whiteness of her cheek, and cried out,—

"Good Heavens! who has done this thing?"

She laughed hysterically.

"It is a sign of my father's love! Oh, Ralph! dear Ralph! do not look like that! He did not mean to be so violent. In his anger he forgot himself—Ralph! Ralph! I entreat you to do nothing rashly—he is my father," and then she was kneeling before him with upraised hands and frightened, appealing face, for there was murder in his eyes.

He lifted her in his strong arms, he held her in his close embrace, whilst his breath came hard and fast through his clenched teeth.

"He shall suffer for this—the devil!" he said at last. "He shall suffer for this!" and she clung the closer to him moaning,—

"For my sake! for my sake, Ralph! Oh! do not make me regret coming to you in my grief! It is not by punishing him you can comfort me. Listen, I will hide nothing from you." Heeping in the meanwhile he would recover something of his wonted temper, and little by little, with many a pause she related all that had passed, ending with a passionate entreaty that he would not send her away

from him; and as she spoke the trouble in his eyes deepened.

As the agitated voice died out he, holding her fast, said,—

"My darling! my darling! Heaven knows how gladly I would call you my wife to-morrow—but to do so I must commit perjury. You are yet a minor; and say we were married you know what revenge your father would take upon us. You would be in a worse case than you are now. We must think of some other plan. Unfortunately, I have not a relative in the world to whom I could send you—and here you cannot stay. Wait—let me confide all to Freke. She is a shrewd woman, and may afford us substantial help."

"She hates me!"

"She will not do so when she knows what you are suffering for my sake. Now drink this wine, and I will go to her. Oh! my dear one, oh! my dear one! how can I atone to you for all the sorrow I am causing you?" and he kissed her many times before he went in search of Dame Freke.

At first the woman utterly refused to help, scoffed at the notion of a Lynn sacrificing all to a Hastings. But eventually Ralph's persuasions prevailed, and when she entered the studio and saw the lovely face so shamefully branded, her heart melted within her, and taking the daintily-clad figure in her arms, she kissed the girl once as sign and seal of her future devotion.

"Dear lady," she said, "Mr. Ralph has told me all the difficulties in the way of your wedding. Now, did anyone see you leave the Hall to-night?"

"No."

"Well, what I'm going to say, I guess neither of you'll relish; but I can't think of a better plan. You just go back to the Hall, as quick as you can, and try to get in unseen. In three days that ugly fellow who calls himself a lord, wants his answer. You keep true to the master, and let it be no, because by Saturday I shall be ready to help you, I hope. I've a cousin, Master Ralph; at least, I had five years back, and I ain't ever heard of her death, so I reckon she's alive. She married a fisherman, a nice, decent sort of fellow, and they live at a tiny village in Cornwall, called Pennefeather. Now, if you would be content to live as simple as they do, you might go down to them, they'd make you comfortable as they could; but they're only poor folks, and not used to ladies' ways."

"I will go!" Veronica cried. "Oh, yes! anything would be better than the life they will make me lead at home, and I was never fond of gaiety," then, suddenly, her arms fell to her sides. "Oh," she said, a crimson flush rising to her cheeks, "I forgot, I have no money; my father makes me no settled allowance."

"That is my affair," said Ralph, quickly. "You must let me supply your needs, and you are giving me an incentive to work. Not a word darling—not a word of thanks! Do you think you can endure to spend these three days at the Hall?"

"I will," bravely and quietly, "and at the close of them, if my father persists in his determination, how am I to act?"

"Why, miss," said Freke, "you just make your way up here, and we'll get you off, if things only go right. I shall send a letter to my cousin to-morrow, by first post. Her answer 'll reach me on Saturday, and then we'll snap our fingers at old Lynn and that other fellow. Now, Mr. Ralph, take the lady back before anyone knows where she's been, or that she's been out at all. My duty to you, miss, and if you keep faith with my master, I'll serve you true all my days."

She watched them as they went quickly along the deserted road, sighing to herself,—

"She's beautiful, and she seems good, but oh! why couldn't he have chosen some other woman for his wife. It's hard to forget she's a Lynn."

Just on the confines of the park, Veronica paused.

"Come no farther," she said. "Now, with so much at stake, we must not risk detection."

"You are not afraid, sweetheart?" he questioned, earnestly.

"Oh, no, not now that I have seen you, and shall so soon see you again. Good-night, good-night, my dear one—not good-bye," and then she slipped from his embrace, and went towards the house; and neither of them guessed through what humiliation she would pass, what agonies of doubt and suspense he would suffer, before they met again.

CHAPTER V.

DURING the three following days, no one outside the Hall saw Miss Lynn; but servants talked as they will, and it was rumoured through Hemel Felix that she could not appear in public because she yet carried the mark of her father's violence upon her fair face.

She kept strictly to her room, seeing no one but the servant who brought up her meals, and her mother who visited her every morning, and weakly wept over her, whilst she entreated her to submit to her father's will; and drew terrible pictures of what her life would be, if she persisted in her infatuation for Ralph.

And Veronica listened, answering gently, but firmly. Never once wavering in her resolve, never once afraid, because Ralph loved her, and in his love lay her strength. So the three days came and went, and on Saturday she was summoned to the study, where she found Lord Mansel waiting her.

He had not seen her since her interview with her father, and now he gave an angry cry when he saw the purple mark upon the whiteness of her cheek.

"Who did that?" he demanded, "was it he, old Lynn? I know it was, there is no need for you to answer. The wretched cur! I must teach him to respect my property, for you are mine, dear Veronica. Is it not so? You cannot withstand such love as mine. You are not happy in your home—my lifelong endeavour shall be to make all your years bright," and in his admiration and pity for her, he meant really what he said then. "Give me your hand, sweetheart, and with your hand yourself," and he went nearer to her in his eagerness to possess and call her his; but she drew back quickly.

"No," she said, "do not touch me. You had my final answer on Wednesday. I am not a woman to lightly change my mind. My lord, you and I can never be more to each other than we now are!"

The weak, vicious face darkened.

"I have sworn you shall be my wife, and I will keep my vow. If I cannot win you by fair means, I will by foul!"

"I can well understand that the foul means would best recommend themselves to a man of your calibre," she answered, with such deep disdain that the blood rushed in a torrent over his face and brow; and he lost all control over himself.

"You have a bitter tongue," he said, violently; "but you would do well to control it; for every gibe and sneer I receive now you shall be paid two-fold when you are my wife!"

"You offer me every inducement to listen to your suit," she answered, coldly, and standing as she did, secure in Ralph's love and her own strength, she could afford to smile at his threats.

The smile seemed to madden him.

"You have preferred a beggarly artist to me. You blindly believe that he loves you for your beauty, and I tell you that even loveliness such as yours would have failed to touch him, had he not hoped that in winning it he would win back his home too. You are but the means to his end. When he learns that if you go counter to your father's wishes, you

will be deprived of your inheritance, he will be more than content to let you go free!"

"You have had small opportunity of gauging Mr. Hastings' character, and you judge him by your own standard of honour. He and I know that by my marriage with him, I shall forfeit all claim upon my father's estate, but we are content. Please consider our interview ended, and I leave to you the congenial task of acquainting Mr. Lynn with my decision. Allow me to pass;" but he set his back against the door, and leaning forward said,—

"You shall go when you have heard my final argument. As my wife you would be above reproach, people would forget that until I gave you my name, you were one that was stained and smirched, that was hated by many!"

She stood quite still, looking fully into his eyes; but he saw that she pale face had grown paler, and that the beautiful mouth was less firm than before.

"What do you mean?" she asked, after a long pause. "What stain is there upon me?"

He laughed unpleasantly.

"I will enlighten you, although Papa Lynn will not thank me for my pains; and your so-called lover's pretty plans will be thwarted. For, I take it, you are too proud a woman to be married for the sake of your possessions. This place, with all pertaining to it, belongs by right to Ralph Hastings as everybody knows, but none can prove. Your father won it from his father by fraud; but being a lawyer and a clever one, he managed so beautifully that nothing could be proved against him!"

"It is not true!" she gasped, as she sank upon a chair; but her voice told him how deeply the blow had struck home, and he went on mercilessly.

"If you doubt my word, charge Lynn with these things. Let him deny them if he can! Why else should the good families about be so chary of offering him their hospitality, or accepting his. Do you think you would be so well received but that you are his heiress, and money covers a multitude of sins? What love do you suppose that fellow Hastings has for the daughter of one who stole his inheritance, made his father a suicide, and sent his mother to an untimely grave!"

"No! no!" she cried, wildly. "If you have any spark of manhood in you, speak the truth to me now!"

"I have done so. Do not you see how impossible, how unnatural it is you should ever be Hastings' wife? Don't look like that. It was my last card, I would not have played it could I have won you in any other way; but you forced my hand. Now, Veronica, what is my answer?"

She rose to her feet, clasping her temples with her slender, trembling hands.

"My answer is still the same," she said, looking at him with tragic eyes. "I would not marry you now to save my life! You have taken my lover from me, you have made me feel myself an outcast, and have taught me to despise the parents I have tried vainly to love. Oh, I think I hate you! What good have you left in my life? Let me go! be content. I will carry my shame into no man's house!"

"You will change your mind pretty quickly when you find what a purgatory old Lynn will make for you; be reasonable, Veronica, he isn't the only man who has grown fat upon another's ruin. And as my wife—"

"As your wife I should be a thousand-fold more wretched than I am now—there is no more to say! Stand aside!" and, frowningly, he obeyed her; but, in his heart, he felt certain of ultimate victory; knowing her to be proud, not rightly guessing the quality of her pride, he thought, "when she has had time for reflection, she will only be too glad to shelter herself under an ancient and honourable name, and I can afford to wait a few

days; but she shall pay dearly for her arrogance when once she is my lady!"

Veronica went slowly and heavily up to her own chamber. She understood now all that had seemed strange in Ralph's conduct in the early days of their renewed acquaintance; all his obvious dislike of her father. She knew now why the county magnates treated him with a mixture of contempt and condescension.

She never once doubted Mansel's statement, for his voice and look had carried conviction with them; and alas! alas! she knew that in little things her father was not honourable. And now—well now, for her, life was practically over! How dared she link her lot with Ralph's? In days to come, when the first glamour of their love was no longer upon him, would he not reproach her that she had listened to him—and, remembering his own stainless name, regret he had taken to himself the child of shame. She covered her face with her shaking hands—she had been proud, but was so no longer.

"Oh!" she cried. "I envy the poorest peasant girl who can boast a clean name! Ralph, my Ralph! to-day you were to have led me into safety—one day you were to call me wife; but now, but now! this can never be, and, with all my bleeding heart, I pray we may never meet again! How could I listen to your entreaties and resist them? How could I look into your dear eyes, and reading the deep love there, withhold my own? Oh, my dear one! oh, my dear one! I leave you free, and may Heaven teach you forgetfulness of your enemy's daughter!"

She did not cry, the wound was too fresh and cruel yet. Afterwards tears would come, but now, not now. She could only sit and brood over her misery, and Ralph's wonderful condescension in stooping to woo and wed her—she who had nothing of her own save the beauty Heaven had bestowed, and of which for Ralph's dear sake, she had been so passionately grateful.

She let her hands fall in her lap, and gave herself up to the bitterest thoughts, the keenest woe that in all her life had come to her. No, she would never marry now. Ralph only had her love, and him she dared not wed.

"Lost! lost!" she whispered to her heavy heart. "Lost, my darling! I would that we had never met!" her chin drooped low upon her breast, and her face, save for that purple mark, was white as the magnolia about her windows. It was thus her mother found her.

"Oh, Veronica!" she exclaimed, fretfully, "how can you anger your father so wantonly. You care less than nothing what I suffer because of you. He is waiting for you downstairs. Mansel has already told him of your folly! Child, for my sake and your own, be wise."

Veronica rose.

"I will try to do the right," she said, drearily. "Do not fret, mamma. Papa's anger will not fall on you!"

And when she joined Elias Lynn—for a moment he both looked and felt ashamed, as he saw the mark his violence had left upon her face; and there was an indescribable change in her that had its influence on him.

Her former proud bearing was utterly gone, but in its place there was a sad dignity—as new as it was sad. All the fire had gone from her eyes, which were dark with a shame and pain beyond his power to understand or fathom.

"You have seen Mansel?" he said, not looking towards her.

"Yes; and he has received my final answer. Papa, you may beat me, you may kill me, but you never shall induce me to give my life into that man's keeping. Hush! Let me speak! This once I will be heard! You have never attempted to win my love, you have never lavished any affection upon me; but though I could not feel a daughter's tenderness for you, I tried to honour you—perhaps the more because you were not dear to me. This morning, Lord Mansel has told

me that which takes even this poor consolation from me. Father! father! is it true that this house and all its lands are yours by a gigantic fraud?"

In her anguish she had approached him, and laid her hand upon his arm. He thrust her away roughly.

"It is a lie!" he said, but the look in his eyes answered her only too truly. "What motive," he asked, huskily, "had Mansel for telling you this—this idle and malicious story?"

"He wanted to coerce me into marriage with him. But if it is true—and oh, forgive me! forgive me!—I feel it is—I will not marry him or any other—I will stay with you, and Heaven helping me, I will do my duty towards you, and I shall not vex you by keeping faith with Mr. Hastings."

"But," stammered Lynn, "you are acting foolishly, and taking everything for granted that that fool Mansel has chosen to say. Of course he has heard a garbled version of the affair, and people of his rank are always ready to think and speak evil of those beneath them, who by sheer industry and pluck lift themselves up to their own level. Don't be rash, Veronica. Take time, my dear, take time. At the end of a year you'll think differently; and Mansel loves you well enough to wait. If not, there are others as well born who would be glad to call you wife. And you really mean that you have seen the folly of your entanglement with Hastings? That is well, my dear!"

He spoke and looked so fawningly, that the girl's heart was filled with a great disgust, but he was her father, so she schooled herself to say, quietly,—

"I shall not marry Mr. Hastings, all is over between us. But I shall be glad if you would let me go away a little while until I have lived down my pain and grow accustomed to our disgrace."

He heard her out in silence, and, perhaps, for the first time, he realised she was not the type of woman he understood, and had believed her to be. Then he said,—

"It is much against my will that you go, but I think it can be arranged; and in October your mother and I will join you. I hope you will then be more amenable to reason. And—and," shamefacedly, "I may as well tell you, Veronica, I had no intention of hurting you; but I was beside myself with passion."

"It does not matter," she said, with a weary smile. "I wish that I could lose the wound my heart has received as soon as I shall this. I have one favour to beg of you. Do not subject me again to Lord Mansel's unwelcome attentions. I will not endure them."

"Pooh!" with an attempt at raillery, "In the autumn you will have changed your mind. Until then, you will be free of his society, and so will learn to desire it; but he leaves here to-night. You will not see him again?"

"Decidedly no," and so their interview ended.

In her own room, Veronica stood before her window, looking out towards Lilac Cottage. Had Dame Freke received her expected letter, were they even now watching for her coming? A low moan broke from her lips.

"He will think me false, he will believe me the true daughter of my father! Oh, Ralph! Oh, my Ralph! Heaven help me to bear my cross. Heaven grant your thoughts of me may be merciful!"

A servant brought her a dainty meal. She sent it away untouched. Her mother came to her to believe as little ill as she could of her father, sobbing out,—

"It was for our sakes he did it—for our sakes!"

She shivered through all her being, but spoke gently and consolingly to this weak, shallow woman, who was content to live in the state her husband's dishonesty had secured for her.

Then she was alone again. The sun went

down, and still at the Cottage they waited for her coming.

CHAPTER VI.

DAME FREKE had duly received her cousin's reply. The worthy woman would be very glad to receive Miss Lynn, provided the young lady would be content with such accommodation as she could give.

So, full of hope, master and maid waited for Veronica's coming; and when it began to grow dusk, a vague anxiety woke in Ralph's heart, and he feared he scarcely knew what.

"She is only waiting for the dark to hide her flight," said Freke, reassuringly. "She'll come presently," but the evening wore away, and still there was no sign of Veronica. "Something must have happened," said Freke, "to delay her. You'll no doubt get a note to-morrow, sir; it's best not to run any risk of discovery."

But he could not rest, and so went down to the Hall, and through the grounds. He hovered about a long while, but met with no success. No servants were about, and, of course, if he made inquiries at the house, he would only raise suspicions, and effectually prevent Veronica's escape.

So until the morning he must possess himself with what patience he could. It is needless to say, sleep would not visit him that night, and that he rose unrefreshed and haggard.

Still in the hope of seeing Veronica, he went to church that morning; but only Lynn and his wife were present, and his anxiety became more definite, more cruel to bear.

He was among the first to leave the church, what had he to wait for? and just before him, he saw one of the Hall servants. To a man of Ralph's proud nature, it was gall and wormwood to tamper with his enemy's dependant; but necessity has no law, and he felt he could not endure the heavy day without some tidings of his dear one.

Perhaps her visit to the Cottage had been discovered, and she was now a prisoner in her room, too carefully guarded to escape him and happiness. He hurried after the man, and thrusting a bribe into his hand, said,—

"I want you to tell me all you know about Miss Lynn. Is she well? Is she at the Hall?"

Fortunately the fellow had sympathy with the luckless lovers.

"I'd have told you that, sir," he said, "without payment, though I'm obliged to you all the same. I don't think Miss Veronica is very well. We don't see her much or often lately. She keeps to her room."

"Is she compelled to do so? Is she a prisoner?" Ralph asks, quickly.

"I don't think so, sir. I fancy she likes it best, since—well—of course, you know the master struck her, and she seems changed since. But I dare say she'll come down again now Lord Mansel has gone."

"He has gone? Thank you; may I trust you to convey a note to Miss Lynn. I will reward you to the best of my power for any risk you run. I am not a rich man!"

"I want nothing more, sir," the man interrupted, quickly. "I'd be glad to serve you if I can—I'm a Hemel Feris man, sir. If you'll get your note ready, and bring it down to the shrubbery about seven this evening, I'll take care Miss Veronica gets it. The family'll be at dinner, and I shan't run any risk. Now, sir, with your leave, I'll say good morning, it won't do for the old fox to see us together," and touching his hat, he hurried away in the direction of the Hall, whilst Ralph went home a little relieved to find Veronica was well and had not been spirited away.

In the evening he carried his note with him to the spot appointed, and find his emissary waiting, gave it into his charge. In it he begged Veronica to delay her flight no longer. He told her that all arrangements for her comfort were concluded, and that he himself

would convey her to Pennefather on the morrow.

They would travel by a train leaving Hemel Feris at seven thirty; and as they would not reach their destination until nearly midnight, Freke would accompany them. To prevent all possible chance of discovery, or any rumour getting abroad, that they had flown together, Veronica was to leave Hemel Feris by herself, he and Freke joining her at a little town some forty miles down the line.

The note ended with passionate assurances of his undying love, and entreaties that she would prove her dear love to him by trusting her future into his care.

The friendly footman thrust the missive into her hand as she followed her mother to the drawing-room, and making some trivial excuse, she went at once to her own apartment, and with trembling fingers drew out Ralph's message of love.

Poor, proud Veronica!—no, not proud now any more! but humble as the meekest of her sisters in her woe and inherited disgrace!

How could she bear to read those written words and refuse to listen to them? How could she put aside with resolute, cruel hands, all this treasure of love, joy, and hope, and be content to drag on a weary and solitary existence.

"Ralph!" she cried aloud, in her anguish. "Ralph, oh, my beloved! oh, my beloved! knowing all, you have stooped to woo me, shall not I then hold you to your vows, cling to you, serve you, love you with all my heart, and all my life?"

And then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she flung herself down upon her knees, and prayed humbly and fervently that Heaven would teach her to do that which she so fully believed was her duty.

And as she prayed the blessed tears came to her relief, and she did not seek to stem their torrent.

Long after, when she rose, her face was glorified and exalted, for she had sacrificed her love for Ralph's welfare, as she believed, and in time! oh, yes in time, she would be content.

She went downstairs to her father, the tears yet wet upon her lashes.

"Papa, you are wishful I should not marry Mr. Hastings?"

"You know my opinion on that subject, Veronica!"

"I have heard it; I want to obey you; but if I stay here longer I cannot answer for my submission. Take me away! oh, take me away to-night! There is still time—I cannot breathe here—I dare not risk meeting him—I love him, and my love makes me so weak, so weak!"

Mr. Lynn rose impatiently. He was angry that his movements should be so hurried; but all the same he saw what danger he should incur by remaining at Hemel Feris; for, at that time, he thought he would rather see Veronica dead than married to his victim's son. Had he risked so much to win his wealth and increase it, only to return it to Ralph at the last?

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked, "where is it you wish to go?"

"Anywhere—anywhere, so that he does not find me! I am as weak as wax in his hands. And let us steal out unknown to any. I will dress now, and you can send on my luggage at your convenience."

She spoke and acted so feverishly that her father thought it best to humour her.

"Very well; there is yet time to catch the ten fifteen train to Liverpool street. Make what preparations you consider necessary. I will tell you my plans on the way."

She had half-an-hour to spare—she spent it in writing her farewell to Ralph. At its conclusion she came down cloaked and veiled; and giving the note to the friendly footman, bade him deliver it to Ralph at noon the next day.

Then she and her father stole from the Hall like fugitives; and not a word did they

speak until they were well on their way to London. Then Veronica said,—

"Where are you taking me?"

"To my cousin Watkyns. She is leaving England to-morrow for a town in Brittany. It isn't likely anyone will think of searching for you there. It is an out-of-the-way place, healthy, and horribly dull; but so long as you achieve your purpose I don't suppose you will mind that."

"I shall mind nothing now!" she answered, apathetically, and fell into a bitter reverie, whilst her father watched her furtively.

"She will be weary of her self-imposed exile," he thought, "before a week is over. Sarah Watkyns is the most disagreeable old maid under the sun. Fastidious is all but outside the pale of civilisation. There are no amusements, no available cavaliers, nothing in short a girl desires. I'll warrant that before Sarah brings her to meet us at Versailles she'll be ready enough to marry Mansel or any other squire I may choose, just to escape from the dreary monotony of such a life."

And he chuckled audibly to himself over his own perspicacity; but his daughter paid not the least attention to him, being sunk in the depths of her own grief.

Punctually at the time given Veronica's note was conveyed to Ralph, and a flash of excitation rose to his face as he saw the delicate handwriting upon the envelope.

"You will let me know, sir, as soon as you can, what arrangements you have made?" said Freke, hovering in the doorway, "because I shall have a deal to do before we start."

"Yes, I will ring for you presently;" and then he was alone.

With hasty fingers he drew out her letter, and, as he read, all the light faded from his face, all the gladness left his eyes, for this is what she had written in her despair,—

"MY DARLING! MY DARLING!—

"You will not know how I linger over those words, understanding well that so I may never address you again. When you get this I shall be far away, and beyond the reach of your persuasions and entreaties. Oh! I hope and pray I am acting for your ultimate happiness. For myself I care nothing. Perhaps, in the first moments of your bitter disappointment, you will feel some natural anger against me; but in time you will acknowledge that I acted for the best, and that our union could never have been."

"Oh, my dear love! I know now to what depths you stooped when you sought me for your wife. I understand all that once was so strange in your conduct towards me. How could you so fully and freely give your heart to my father's daughter?"

"All my life I shall thank Heaven I have learned how great and good the heart of man may be. All my life I shall be the better woman because of the love you gave me. And yet I say forget me. No blessing could rest upon our union. Do not try to find and follow me. My endeavour is to hide myself from you until the day, which may be so far away, for which I dare not pray, when I can freely give you back your own, and hold my head erect once more. For the rest—for the rest, sweetheart, I will be true to my love so long as life and memory last."

"Thank your faithful Freke in my name. Oh, Ralph! we might have been so happy (ah! that terrible 'might have been'); but now there is only one word to be spoken between us, and that one word is good-bye! The blessing of Heaven attend you in all your ways, give you that joy and peace denied for ever to your most unhappy,

"VERONICA."

So she was gone. Lost to him, it might be, for ever! She hurried into exile to save him from what she felt would be a calamity! Gone with her broken heart, and her proud, bright head brought low!

Who had told her this evil and bitter secret

it would have been his life's endeavour to hide from her?

A groan broke from his overcharged heart. "Oh, my dear one! why could you not trust to my love and loyalty? Why must you leave me desolate, just when life had opened before me with such glorious promise? My queen! my queen! who shall comfort you in your distress, if not I?"

He read again her sad, hopeless words. Then he rose and sought out Freke, giving her a brief account of what had occurred, and when he ended the woman's honest eyes were full of tears.

"Poor young lady!" she said. "I'm sorry I ever was hard to her. To think that old Lynn's daughter should have such a tender conscience. It's my belief she's a changeling. You don't get figs from thistles. And now, Master Ralph, the question is, what are you going to do?"

"I must find her, if I go to the ends of the earth!"

"Oh! it won't be hard to find such a handsome lady as Miss Veronica. People ain't so easy lost nowadays."

But Ralph was not so hopeful of success. He remembered, with sick dread, how many people disappear yearly in a mysterious fashion, never to be heard of or seen again.

"I will go to the station," he said, "and see what I can learn there," and he at once acted on this idea.

But, alas! his questions elicited nothing but the fact that Mr. and Miss Lynn had left the previous night for Liverpool-street; and a fear struck him that even her letter had been written under coercion, only Veronica was not exactly the sort of girl to be coerced.

To Liverpool-street he went, and there he lost all trace of father and daughter, and after lingering in London three days he returned to find Mr. Lynn had reached home on Tuesday without Veronica.

Then he went to the Hall and demanded an audience with his enemy. A stormy scene ensued in which he accused Lynn of spiriting his daughter away, and demanded to know where he had hidden her.

Lynn, secure in his position, laughed at and openly defied him; twitted him with his presumption in lifting his eyes to Veronica, and concluded by swearing the girl had seen the folly of their unseasoned engagement, and had chosen this way to end it.

"You are a liar!" cried Ralph, passionately. "You are a fool, too, to suppose that I would believe any statement of yours!"

"Am I to be insulted in my own house by a beggarly adventurer?" retorted Lynn, in a paroxysm of rage. "O while you may, or I swear I will have you put out of the place!"

Ralph interrupted him with a short, sarcastic laugh.

"Keep your threats for cowards like yourself," he said. "You don't suppose your brutality is a secret in the village. There is not a man or woman in the place who does not know who inflicted the bruise your daughter yet bears upon her face. I warn you I will never rest until I have found her, and induced her to share my lot, and my stainless name!" and then he went out, meeting Mrs. Lynn in the wide hall.

He would have passed her with a mere bow, but she stayed him with a quick, nervous gesture.

"Mr. Hastings, you will not try to find or molest my daughter. It is far better you and she should never meet again. Her father would never permit her to become your wife!"

"When I have found her, madam, we shall not trouble to ask his consent," he answered, coldly, and left her standing there.

CHAPTER VII.

THE summer days were gone; the "light of the Lily" burned close to the mould, and yet

in all his wanderings to and fro Ralph had learned no tidings of Veronica. At the close of October he returned to Hemel Feris to learn that the Lynns had gone abroad, but no one could give any idea of their whereabouts, and what troubled him most of all was that Lord Mansel had gone with them.

Not that he doubted Veronica's love or steadfastness, but he dreaded the persecutions she might be called upon to bear.

"I wish I had been at home," he said, "I would have followed them until I found her; for something tells me they are going to join her."

And then his funds being all but exhausted, he compelled himself to work long hours at his easel, and when the picture was completed it was declared his masterpiece, because into it he had painted all the passion and pain of all his life.

Meanwhile, Veronica and Miss Watkyns had joined the Lynn party at Versailles; the girl was changed and aged since last her parents saw her. The solitary life at Fautillaire, the lack of congenial society, and of occupation had told terribly upon her; and then, too, she had brooded much over her loss and Ralph's possible anger.

Her eyes were dark with her unwept woe, her face was worn, and the beautiful mouth had a mournful curve.

Mansel was startled when he saw her. This was not the sort of wife he would choose. He should grow to hate that highbred, melancholy face if it confronted him day after day at every turn; and he almost said so much to Lynn.

The ex-lawyer turned upon him with a sneer. "I haven't the slightest doubt that you prefer the dairy-maid style of comeliness; pray do not consider yourself in any way bound to Miss Lynn. I have already received proposals for her hand from the Marquis D'Arvenac. The alliance would be more suitable in every way; and after the expression of your sentiments, I think it well we should part."

So to her intense relief Veronica found herself rid of her unwelcome suitor. The Marquis came and went, but he was a gentleman by nature, and in no way rendered himself offensive. He rode and walked daily with her, never addressing her in the language of love, but taking it quite for granted that eventually she would accept his name together with his elderly heart.

So the days wore by and November came—and if Veronica was pining for news of home and lover, she gave no sign.

"Veronica, don't you think it high time your father returned, it is growing quite dark, and he promised to be home by three."

"He will come presently; something has delayed him," said the girl rising and walking to a window. "Ah! even now he is coming up the road. No; it is the Marquis. Mother, I am not equal to entertaining him to-day;" and she made as though she would escape, but Mrs. Lynn prevented her.

"You know, Veronica, how ill at ease I always am with him; his manner is so haughty. You must stay."

"Very well," and still standing, she waited for the Marquis to be announced. When she saw his face she knew something tragic had occurred.

"Mrs. Lynn—Miss Veronica—I pray you to be calm; Mr. Lynn has met with an accident. We hope it is not serious. He was thrown from his horse, and they are bringing him home. Madame, I implore you to be calm," as the wife broke out into wild screams and wailings; "remember so much depends upon you."

"Mother!" said Veronica quietly; "go to your room, Rosine and Babette will attend you. Father will need my services."

Shrieking and crying still, she was conveyed to her own apartments; and then the daughter waited in absolute silence for her father's coming.

Inexperienced in such matters as she was, she knew when her eyes rested upon his face that but few hours were allotted to him, and for the first time in her life her heart grew tender towards him.

Gently she ministered to his needs, obeying all the doctor's directions implicitly and intelligently; and when they were alone once more, she knelt by his side.

"Dear father, is there nothing I can do for you?" she asked, and kissed his clay-cold brow.

"Bring your mother; before the morning comes I shall be gone. I want her now!"

So Mrs. Lynn was brought in weeping, but the presence of death restrained her, and she only sobbed under her breath as she took the poor wounded head upon her breast.

"Oh Elias! oh Elias! what shall I do without you? Never did a woman have a better husband than you have been to me from the day you first called me wife till now!"

"Thank you, Maria! perhaps in all the world you are the only one who will regret when I am gone. Your future is safe, dear—I can trust you with our daughter!" Then later, as the slow chill dawn began to break, he turned upon his pillows. "Veronica, are you there?"

"Father, yes;" and she took his cold hand gently in her own.

"I am sorry for my sin, child, be as happy as you will. If he can forgive, it will be an easy way to right my wrong," and those were his last words.

A little later he died. The news of his death was conveyed to Hemel Feris, but no one knew where his widow and child resided. Six months later his wife followed him, and it was rumoured the heiress was on her way to England.

One evening later in May, Freke heard a knock at the front door, and opening it, saw a lady draped in heavy mourning and thickly veiled. Instinct told her who it was even before the sweet, sad voice said,—

"Let me in, dear Freke, I must see your master."

"Oh, miss! Oh, my dear, dear miss, you have come at last! Go in; you know where to find him," and she pointed to the studio door.

Without a word, and trembling in every limb, Veronica went forward, turned the handle and entered.

"Ralph!"

And at that one word, he started to his feet, looked into the worn, lovely face, now unveiled, and springing to her side, would have taken her into his embrace, but she waved him back a moment.

"Wait," she said, in a low and broken voice. "Leave me my strength and courage. I so sorely need them. Let me say what I have to say, and then pass out for ever from your honourable life. For years I was ignorant of my father's sin, he died repenting it; when you taught me to love you, I still was ignorant, and the truth, when I learned it, almost killed me. By his will I was left, at my mother's death, sole heiress to his estate. I came as soon as I could to make restitution. Here, Ralph, dear Ralph! I give back all that never was mine by right, all that it would madden me to retain. Think of me, sometimes, kindly as a woman not wholly unhappy, not wholly unblest, because she has found work to do. Good-bye."

"No!" he cried, and caught her hands. "No, Veronica; keep all save yourself. These dear hands, that dear heart, are the only riches I crave. Stay with me, dear!"

She fell on her knees before him, the tears streaming down her pallid cheeks.

"Be merciful. You forget whose child I am—forget me; marry some woman whose name is clean, whose forebears are honourable. Not me! oh, not me! and Heaven bless you in the home to which you have so long been an alien."

"Veronica," he said, solemnly, "I will

never enter it without my wife; only from my wife's hands can I receive these great gifts. You are a wealthy woman, I a poor man, but I don't care one atom what the world says of me, how often it calls me adventurer and fortune-hunter. I am willing to be, as it were, a pensioner on your bounty, if the hand that proffers the gift is mine also."

"Do you mean this?" she questioned, breathlessly.

He had raised her, and drawn her to his side.

"I love you," he answered, gravely. "You alone can make my life glad. Will you give yourself to me?"

Her arms stole about his neck, her head dropped on his breast. A little happy sob broke from her grateful heart.

"My love has always been yours," she whispered, "and with that, all that's mine is thine, ladie." Oh, love, love! he kind to me always. In all the world I have but you!

The world wondered a great deal over their marriage, but they cared less than nothing, being blest in their mutual love. So Ralph came back to his own; but he did not cease to labour at his easel or with his pen. And as years went by, fame came to him, and Veronica's lovely face wore a look of proud content; so that women envied her, and men praised her beauty and gracious ways.

But if she knew these things she scarcely regarded them, so blest was she in the love of husband and children. And Ralph Hastings—well, there are times, when looking on her beauty, thinking of all she suffered and sacrificed for him, strong man as he is, tears of passionate love and gratitude rise to his eyes, and his very soul is humbled within him, because, justly or unjustly, he scarcely believes himself worthy to call her wife.

And Dame Freke? Well, should you chance in your rambles to rest at Hemel Feris, be sure you visit the Hall, and there you will see a gaunt, angular old lady, dressed in rustling black silk, who will give you a full and particular account of the Hastings family.

She is a dame of great importance, which fact she impresses upon you by frequent jingling of her keys, and references to her manifold responsibilities. This is Dame Freke, housekeeper and friend, trusty servant and faithful follower.

[THE END]

FACETIÆ.

NEVER stir another man's ear pot. Let him do his own dirty work.

A MAN who sticks up for his master—a bill-poster.

A CROSS old bachelor suggests that births should be announced under the head of new music.

THREE things that ought never to be from home—the cat, the chimney, and the housewife.

THREE things that never become rusty—the money of the benevolent, the shoes of the butcher's horse, and a woman's tongue.

THERE is one lucky thing about spoiled children—we never have them in our own family.

SOME folks say their work is laid out beforehand. A physician's work is often laid out after he has finished it.

ONE can always tell by the way a woman walks whether she wears shoes of a size suitable to her feet.

WHEN making a speech, my son, follow the example of the best needle manufacturers and sink the I.

DURING the winter the hen may be dilatory, but she generally comes to the scratch when the garden is planted.

"A MAN'S funny-bone," said a little boy in an examination, "is what makes him laugh in his sleeve."

"PA," said little Harry, "what is a soldier of fortune?" "A soldier of fortune, my son, is a soldier that never has any fortune at all."

A SOMEWHAT ambiguous advertisement in a recent issue of a daily paper announces that "a second-hand girl's side-saddle is for sale."

LADY (in new grocery store): "Have you any ten-year-old port wine?" Boy: "No, mum, this grocery store was only started last week."

MAUD (at day school): "Oh, George, I do so love a big dog." George: "I wish I was a big dog." Maud: "Don't worry, you'll grow."

WE have no objection to a man who rides a hobby—not even if he rides it to death. We only protest when he takes up the whole road with it.

"So you were a soldier? Did you go clear through the rebellion?" "No, I married during the war, and have not got through the rebellion yet."

LITTLE DOT: "Papa, I must have a new dress to play in." Papa: "What is the matter with that one?" Little Dot: "It's all worn out 'cept the buttonholes."

THE young man who persuades himself that two people can live as cheaply as one can always find a girl to help him to try the experiment.

EVEN if a boy is always whistling "I want to be an angel," it is just as well to keep the preserved pears on the top shelf of the pantry.

GOODMAN: "Our new minister is troubled with insomnia." CYNICUS: "He should swallow one of his own sermons each night before retiring."

FIGGS: "You have an independent income, haven't you?" DIGGS: "Independent? Well, I should say I had. It has utterly ignored me for years!"

HE stood under the window and sang, "How can I leave thee?" But he did leave, and so suddenly that the dog went back to the house and wept.

WAITER (at the village club): "There's a lady outside who says that her husband promised to be home early to-night." ALL (rising): "Excuse me a moment."

"I FEEL it just as much, my dear little boy," said papa, after he had spanked Billykins. "Yes," sobbed Billykins. "B-but n-not in the same place."

WHEN a girl has a handsome new solitaire diamond engagement ring, she thought involuntarily comes to her mind, how foolish it is for women to wear gloves to match!

"HUSBAND: "No blue-stocking for me? An ignorant woman makes a far better wife." Wife: "Am I a good wife, John?" Husband: "Yes, you are an ideal one."

YOUNG LADY (to gentleman): "No, I should never suit you; I want my own way in everything." He (magnificently): "Well, and you could go on wanting it when we were married."

THEY sat together on the front piazza on a midsummer day. "Do you know that this is the longest day in the year?" he said. "I believe you," she answered, yawning.

HIS REVERENCE: "What, off to work at last, Tim?" Tim Murphy: "Yes, y' riverence. Y' know, O'm a haymaker by trade, an' I always work one week in the year."

MIDDLE-AGED SPINSTER (as tramp comes into the yard): "What do you want here, anything to eat?" Tramp: "What else should I want, madame? Did you think I came to offer a proposal of marriage?"

MISTRESS: "Bridget, we will have cotelettes for breakfast to-morrow morning." Bridget: "The servants don't like cotelettes, marm." Mistress: "But I like cotelettes." Bridget: "It's hardly worth while to get them for one."

ALWAYS keep your brains as well as your hands busy. Bats get into an empty garret.

"UNDERSTAND your mother-in-law helps your wife, old fellow, a great deal?" "Oh! lots; gave her a set of old buttons yesterday, and she rushed me for the money this morning to buy a dress to match them."

"JEN'T this your prayer-book, Miss Chaser?" "Why, yes; thank you, it is. How did you know it, Mr. Bians?" "When I took it up, it opened at the marriage services."

"HIGGLEDY doesn't seem to care so much for his wife as he did when she was Miss Brown." "No, they are one now. And Higgledy isn't the man to be guilty of inordinate self-love."

INDIGNANT BICYCLIST: "Madam, your dog snaps at me every time I pass. Here he comes now." (Starts off.) Old Lady: "Spot, Spot, you foolish dog. Come here. Them ain't bones. Them's legs."

"I EXPECT to die young. All my ancestors were exceptionally short-lived," says Mr. Talkington. "Indeed!" says Miss Pryn. "Yes, my grandfather died in infancy, and—" Miss Pryn: "Oh!"

CONTRIBUTOR: "Here is a manuscript I wish to submit." Editor (waving his hand): "I'm sorry; we are all full just now." Contributor (blandly): "Very well, I will call again when some of you are sober."

BRIDE (just after the wedding): "Alfred, you promised to give me a grand surprise after we were married. What is it?" Bridegroom (a widower): "I've got six children, my pet."

THE meanest man so far on record lives in the Isle of Man. His wife asked him to give her a pet, some animal that would stick to her, and the next evening he brought home a leech.

DEACON SKINNEM: "My dear friend, I grieve to find you so worldly-minded. Why don't you come to church with me?" Mr. Paywell: "Because it worries me to see a half-starved minister."

A SMART bit of repartee was overheard the other day at Killarney. A guide with a tourist scowled at a peasant who stared well at him. "You'll know me again if you meet me," said the guide. "Not if yer wash yer face," said the peasant.

THOMAS: "I don't like to boast, don't cherk-know, but I'll have you to know that I am always present at all the society events. What d'yer think o' that?" Henry: "I think you must be a waiter. Can't account for it in any other way."

"AND what," asked the young woman who is sometimes facetious, "is the rank of the individual who brings up the rear with a bucket and a tin cup?" "O," replied the member of the militia, without hesitation, "he's a lemon-ade de camp."

A CERTAIN official was bothered almost to death by people running in on him at all times of the day, and he was expressing himself emphatically on the subject. "Why don't you put a time lock on your door, so they can get in only at a stated hour?" suggested a friend. "Time lock, nothing," he exclaimed; "what I want is an eternity lock."

YOUNG FATHER: "I am amazed, shocked, my dear, to hear you say you intend to give the baby some paregoric. Don't you know paregoric is opium, and opium stunts the growth, enfeebls the constitution, weakens the brain, destroys the nerves, and produces richness, marasmus, consumption, insanity, and death?" Young Mother: "Horror! I never heard a word about that. I won't give the little ducky darling a drop, no, indeed. But something must be done to stop his yelling. You carry him a while." Father (after an hour's steady stamping with the squalling infant): "Where in thunder is that paregoric?"

SOCIETY.

The Empress Frederick has opened a small hospital at Cronburg, in the Taunus, which is to be maintained entirely at her expense.

A MOVEMENT is on foot for a great International Exhibition at Berlin in 1894. The arrival of the Emperor will soon settle the important question, "to be or not to be."

It is not generally known that an old silk hat can be washed and done up so as to appear perfectly new, but it is a fact.

The Eloho Shield having been won, for the first time for some years past, by the English Eight, it will be formally handed over to the custody of the Lord Mayor, and restored to its old place in the Guildhall, some time in October.

The Prince of Wales is at Homburg, and H.R.H. will not return to England until quite the end of September. The Princess is to stay in Denmark for six or seven weeks. They will not visit Abergeldie Castle this year, but are to be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Fife at Braemar when they go to Scotland.

The magnificent diamond tiara and necklace which the Duchess of Aosta wore when she appeared in full dress on her recent visit to England are the famous jewels which the Emperor Napoleon gave to Princess Clotilde on her marriage, and they are worth a good fortune.

The fashionable young man now writes with a quill pen, the feather parts of which bear pansies, violets, or lilies painted thereupon. The effects are charming. Sometimes the whole pen, feathers and all, is dyed a delicate pink or blue or green.

The German Emperor has asked permission of the King of Sweden to erect a monument at the North Cape, in commemoration of his voyage in those regions, and to encourage navigators to the North. The figure of the Emperor is represented with the right arm pointing the route to voyagers.

The Crown Prince of Portugal, a weakly child of four, is suffering greatly from the abnormal dampness of the Pena Palace at Cintra, and his recovery is very doubtful. His father who has increased in weight to an alarming extent since his accession, is advised very strongly by his physicians to make a cure at Carlsbad, but the political and financial complications of Portugal render it impossible for him to quit the kingdom.

The young King Alexander of Serbia is said to have come off very well with his examinations in religion, geometry, algebra, physics, chemistry, the science of arms, tactics, history, the German, French, English and Latin languages, and the meters expressed themselves quite satisfied with their pupil. After having studied so hard for eight months it may be imagined with what joy he now has his holidays.

During the warm weather, when the use of powder is considered almost necessary, great care should be taken to obtain the best. Every woman who wishes to be sure that there is nothing injurious in her toilet powder can satisfy herself by submitting it to the following test:—Place a teaspoonful of the powder in a glass and add the juice of a lemon. If effervescence takes place, it is an infallible proof that the powder is dangerous and that its use should be avoided, as it will injure the skin and destroy the beauty of the complexion.

In Strasburg, Germany, since 1884, girls have been taught to mend the clothes of their families at the public expense. Materials are furnished by the city when necessary. The instruction is given by teachers of the elementary schools on the weekly holiday. The number of pupils is increased from twenty to about one thousand, and the annual expense is about £150. In one year nine thousand garments were mended by six hundred girls.

STATISTICS.

In all their wars, the British have won the splendid average of 82 per cent. of the battles.

The average weight of an Englishman is 150 pounds; of a Frenchman 136 pounds; a German, 146 pounds.

The average of the pulse in infancy is 120 beats per minute; in manhood, 80; at 60 years, 60. The pulse of females is more frequent than that of males.

The vine ceases to grow at 2,300 feet above the level of the sea, Indian corn at 2,800 feet, oak at 3,350 feet, walnut at 3,600 feet, ash at 4,800 feet, yellow pine at 6,200 feet, and fir at 6,700 feet.

The forests of "Darkest Africa" strike the imagination, but they are not the greatest on the earth. In the Empire of Russia there are 494,228,000 acres of forest; in Africa according to calculation, there are only 224,000,000 acres.

GEMS.

Do not unto yourself that which thou wouldst not have others do unto thee.

Good laws are of little avail when bad men are depended upon to enforce them.

Stand up for what you believe until you are honestly convinced of your error.

EVERY woman is a daughter, sister, wife, or mother. Let a man treat a woman as he would have other men treat his daughter, sister, wife, or mother. Every man is a son, brother, husband, or father. Let a woman act towards a man as she would desire other women to act towards her son, brother, husband, or father.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GRAHAM WAFERS.—In one half-pound of flour put a little salt and sugar, stir in one half-pint of sweet cream, mix well and quickly, roll out very thin, cut in squares, prick with a fork, and bake in a very hot oven a few minutes.

GREENGAGE JAM.—Four pounds greengages, four pounds crystallized sugar. Take the stones nicely from the greengages and put the stones into a nice little saucepan, with two breakfastcups of water, to boil for half-an-hour gently. Strain this and put the liquid into the jelly pan, add the sugar, and stir till it all boils; then put in the greengages and boil gently for half-an-hour. Skim and put it in pots. If taking the stones from the fruit is too much trouble, put one breakfastcup of water and the sugar into the pan to boil, then add the plums picked and washed and boil half-an-hour and pot.

PICKLED CUCUMBER.—Two cucumbers, one breakfastcupful vinegar, one teaspoonful of peppercorns, salt, mustard, nutmeg. Small cucumbers should be pickled whole, but the ordinary kind should be cut in rather thick slices and the seeds picked out; put them into a strong brine of salt and water for a day, then drain and dry them thoroughly and put them in a jar. Boil a large breakfastcupful of vinegar (if you have two cucumbers), and pour it over them in a jar, cover over at once with thick paper or a plate, and set the jar near the fire. Next day pour off all the vinegar, boil it again and pour it over the cucumbers; cover again quite close to keep the steam in. Do this again the next day. This makes the pickle daily become a greener colour. Boil the vinegar the fourth time with a teaspoonful of peppercorns, a little mustard, a little nutmeg, and half a teaspoonful of salt, pour it all over the cucumbers, and cork or cover tightly.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A WATERPROOF paper has lately been invented that will even stand boiling.

Frogs, toads, and serpents never take food but that which they are satisfied is alive.

THERE are more than twenty times as many Germans in England as there are Englishmen in Germany.

The Hindoos are said to have no word for "friend." The Italians have no equivalent for "humility."

From the sun our earth would appear as a bright star, and from the nearest fixed star it would be invisible.

The printing press is the real civilizer, and has done more than any organization to better the condition of man.

The very common notion that getting wet through with sea-water doesn't induce cold is simply nonsense. A cold caught through getting wet from the sea is just as lasting as any other, and often a very trying one to get rid of.

THERE are two restaurants in the Soho district, at both of which snails are kept all ready for the customers as a regular thing; the usual price being about two shillings a dozen—for they are rather a delicacy. They are just now coming into full season.

THE largest congregation that ever assembled to hear the words of a preacher, was the concourse of 23,000 persons to whom the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon preached at the Crystal Palace, on October 7th, 1857, the day appointed as a fast at the time of the Indian Mutiny.

IRON expands with heat. So if railway rails were laid to exactly meet one another, a piping hot summer day would result in the destruction of the track. It is 400 miles from London to Edinburgh, and on the average the railway lines that lie between the two places are 340 yards longer in summer than in winter.

A SCIENTIST who has been investigating the subject claims that a man drowns on account of the weight of the blood in his body. Blood being heavier than water, it always sinks, and therefore the weight of the blood in a human body is so great as to sink any one who falls into the water and is unable to swim.

In the production of common watch glasses the glass is blown into a sphere about a metre in diameter, sufficient metal being taken to give the desired thickness, as the mass may be. Discs are then cut out from this sphere with the aid of a pair of compasses having a diamond at the extremity of one leg. There is a knack in detaching the disc after it has been cut. A good workman will, it is said, cut 6,000 glasses in a day.

The Zugaros, a tribe of South America, have a curious way of courting. The love-stricken young man goes out hunting, and, on his return, throws his game at the feet of the young lady who has smitten him together with a sufficient quantity of fuel to cook it. If she takes up the game, lights a fire, and commences to cook it, he knows his suit is accepted, but, if not, he turns away, a sadder if not a wiser man.

A MODEL of the first writing machine made in America still stands. "It was patented in 1843 by one Charles Thurber, of Massachusetts, and is a funny thing in its dimensions. It has a wheel a foot in diameter, which turns horizontally upon a central pivot; the rim of the wheel is bored with 25 holes, in each one of which is a rod bearing at the top a letter of glass and at the bottom a similar letter of steel. The paper is so arranged that the line to be printed is under the rim of this wheel and the letter wanted is swung into position by turning the wheel; when there, a rod bearing it is depressed until the steel type or letter touches the paper. The fastest operator could not write more than half as fast as a man with a pen.

down, and still at the Cottage they waited for her coming.

CHAPTER VI.

DAME FREKE had duly received her cousin's reply. The worthy woman would be very glad to receive Miss Lynn, provided the young lady would be content with such accommodation as she could give.

So, full of hope, master and maid waited for Veronica's coming; and when it began to grow dusk, a vague anxiety woke in Ralph's heart, and he feared he scarcely knew what.

"She is only waiting for the dark to hide her flight," said Freke, reassuringly. "She'll come presently," but the evening wore away, and still there was no sign of Veronica. "Something must have happened," said Freke, "to delay her. You'll no doubt get a note to-morrow, sir; it's best not to run any risk of discovery."

But he could not rest, and so went down to the Hall, and through the grounds. He hovered about a long while, but met with no success. No servants were about, and, of course, if he made inquiries at the house, he would only raise suspicions, and effectually prevent Veronica's escape.

So until the morning he must possess himself with what patience he could. It is needless to say, sleep would not visit him that night, and that he rose unrefreshed and haggard.

Still in the hope of seeing Veronica, he went to church that morning; but only Lynn and his wife were present, and his anxiety became more definite, more cruel to bear.

He was among the first to leave the church, what had he to wait for? and just before him, he saw one of the Hall servants. To a man of Ralph's proud nature, it was gall and wormwood to tamper with his enemy's dependant; but necessity has no law, and he felt he could not endure the heavy day without some tidings of his dear one.

Perhaps her visit to the Cottage had been discovered, and she was now a prisoner in her room, too carefully guarded to escape him and happiness. He hurried after the man, and thrusting a bribe into his hand, said,—

"I want you to tell me all you know about Miss Lynn. Is she well? Is she at the Hall?"

Fortunately the fellow had sympathy with the luckless lovers.

"I'd have told you that, sir," he said, "without payment, though I'm obliged to you all the same. I don't think Miss Veronica is very well. We don't see her much or often lately. She keeps to her room."

"Is she compelled to do so? Is she a prisoner?" Ralph asked, quickly.

"I don't think so, sir. I fancy she likes it best, since—well—of course, you know the master struck her, and she seems changed since. But I daresay she'll come down again now Lord Mansel has gone."

"He has gone? Thank you; may I trust you to convey a note to Miss Lynn. I will reward you to the best of my power for any risk you run. I am not a rich man!"

"I want nothing more, sir," the man interrupted, quickly. "I'd be glad to serve you if I can—I'm a Hemel Feris man, sir. If you'll get your note ready, and bring it down to the shrubbery about seven this evening, I'll take care Miss Veronica gets it. The family'll be at dinner, and I shan't run any risk. Now, sir, with your leave, I'll say good morning, it won't do for the old fox to see us together," and touching his hat, he hurried away in the direction of the Hall, whilst Ralph went home a little relieved to find Veronica was well and had not been spirited away.

In the evening he carried his note with him to the spot appointed, and find his emissary waiting, gave it into his charge. In it he begged Veronica to delay her flight no longer. He told her that all arrangements for her comfort were concluded, and that he himself

would convey her to Pennesfeather on the morrow.

They would travel by a train leaving Hemel Feris at seven thirty; and as they would not reach their destination until nearly midnight, Freke would accompany them. To prevent all possible chance of discovery, or any rumour getting abroad, that they had flown together, Veronica was to leave Hemel Feris by herself, he and Freke joining her at a little town some forty miles down the line.

The note ended with passionate assurances of his undying love, and entreaties that she would prove her dear love to him by trusting her future into his care.

The friendly footman thrust the missive into her hand as she followed her mother to the drawing-room, and making some trivial excuse, she went at once to her own apartment, and with trembling fingers drew out Ralph's message of love.

Poor, proud Veronica!—no, not proud now any more! but humble as the meekest of her sisters in her woe and inherited disgrace!

How could she bear to read those written words and refuse to listen to them? How could she put aside with resolute, cruel hands, all this treasure of love, joy, and hope, and be content to drag on a weary and solitary existence.

"Ralph!" she cried aloud, in her anguish. "Ralph, oh, my beloved! oh, my beloved! knowing all, you have stooped to woo me, shall not I then hold you to your vows, cling to you, serve you, love you with all my heart, and all my life?"

And then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she flung herself down upon her knees, and prayed humbly and fervently that Heaven would teach her to do that which she so fully believed was her duty.

And as she prayed the blessed tears came to her relief, and she did not seek to stem their torrent.

Long after, when she rose, her face was glorified and exalted, for she had sacrificed her love for Ralph's welfare, as she believed, and in time! oh, yes in time, she would be content.

She went downstairs to her father, the tears yet wet upon her lashes.

"Papa, you are wishful I should not marry Mr. Hastings?"

"You know my opinion on that subject, Veronica!"

"I have heard it; I want to obey you; but if I stay here longer I cannot answer for my submission. Take me away! oh, take me away to-night! There is still time—I cannot breathe here—I dare not risk meeting him—I love him, and my love makes me so weak, so weak!"

Mr. Lynn rose impatiently. He was angry that his movements should be so hurried; but all the same he saw what danger he should incur by remaining at Hemel Feris; for, at that time, he thought he would rather see Veronica dead than married to his victim's son. Had he risked so much to win his wealth and increase it, only to return it to Ralph at the last?

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked, "where is it you wish to go?"

"Anywhere—anywhere, so that he does not find me! I am as weak as wax in his hands. And let us steal out unknown to any. I will dress now, and you can send on my luggage at your convenience."

She spoke and acted so feverishly that her father thought it best to humour her.

"Very well; there is yet time to catch the ten fifteen train to Liverpool street. Make what preparations you consider necessary. I will tell you my plans on the way."

She had half-an-hour to spare—she spent it in writing her farewell to Ralph. At its conclusion she came down cloaked and veiled; and giving the note to the friendly footman, bade him deliver it to Ralph at noon the next day.

Then she and her father stole from the Hall like fugitives; and not a word did they

speak until they were well on their way to London. Then Veronica said,—

"Where were you taking me?"

"To my cousin Watkyns. She is leaving England to-morrow for a town in Brittany. It isn't likely anyone will think of searching for you there. It is an out-of-the-way place, healthy, and horribly dull; but so long as you achieve your purpose I don't suppose you will mind that."

"I shall mind nothing now!" she answered, apathetically, and fell into a bitter reverie, whilst her father watched her furtively.

"She will be weary of her self-imposed exile," he thought, "before a week is over. Sarah Watkyns is the most disagreeable old maid under the sun. Fantilaire is all but outside the pale of civilisation. There are no amusements, no available cavaliers, nothing in short a girl desires. I'll warrant that before Sarah brings her to meet us at Versailles she'll be ready enough to marry Mansel or any other sutor I may choose, just to escape from the dreary monotony of such a life."

And he chuckled audibly to himself over his own perspicacity; but his daughter paid not the least attention to him, being sunk in the depths of her own grief.

Punctually at the time given Veronica's note was conveyed to Ralph, and a flush of exultation rose to his face as he saw the delicate handwriting upon the envelope.

"You will let me know, sir, as soon as you can, what arrangements you have made?" said Freke, hovering in the doorway, "because I shall have a deal to do before we start."

"Yes, I will ring for you presently," and then he was alone.

With hasty fingers he drew out her letter, and, as he read, all the light faded from his face, all the gladness left his eyes, for this is what she had written in her despair,—

"MY DARLING! MY DARLING!—"

"You will not know how I linger over those words, understanding well that so I may never address you again. When you get this I shall be far away, and beyond the reach of your persuasions and entreaties. Oh! I hope and pray I am acting for your ultimate happiness. For myself I care nothing. Perhaps, in the first moments of your bitter disappointment, you will feel some natural anger against me; but in time you will acknowledge that I acted for the best, and that our union could never have been."

"Oh, my dear love! I know now to what depths you stooped when you sought me for your wife. I understand all that once was so strange in your conduct towards me. How could you so fully and freely give your heart to my father's daughter?"

"All my life I shall thank Heaven I have learned how great and good the heart of man may be. All my life I shall be the better woman because of the love you gave me. And yet I say forget me. No blessing could rest upon our union. Do not try to find and follow me. My endeavour is to hide myself from you until the day, which may be so far away, for which I dare not pray, when I can freely give you back your own, and hold my head erect once more. For the rest—for the rest, sweetheart, I will be true to my love so long as life and memory last."

"Thank you faithful Freke in my name. Oh, Ralph! we might have been so happy (ah! that terrible 'might have been'); but now there is only one word to be spoken between us, and that one word is good-bye! The blessing of Heaven attend you in all your ways, give you that joy and peace denied for ever to your most unhappy,

"VERONICA."

So she was gone. Lost to him, it might be, for ever! She hurried into exile to save him from what she felt would be a calamity! Gone with her broken heart, and her proud, bright head brought low!

Who had told her this evil and bitter secret

it would have been his life's endeavour to hide from her?

A groan broke from his overcharged heart. "Oh, my dear one! why could you not trust to my love and loyalty? Why must you leave me desolate, just when life had opened before me with such glorious promise? My queen! my queen! who shall comfort you in your distress, if not I?"

He read again her sad, hopeless words. Then he rose and sought out Freke, giving her a brief account of what had occurred, and when he ended the woman's honest eyes were full of tears.

"Poor young lady!" she said. "I'm sorry I ever was hard to her. To think that old Lynn's daughter should have such a tender conscience. It's my belief she's a changeling. You don't get figs from thistles. And now, Master Ralph, the question is, what are you going to do?"

"I must find her, if I go to the ends of the earth!"

"Oh! it won't be hard to find such a handsome lady as Miss Veronica. People ain't so easy lost nowadays."

But Ralph was not so hopeful of success. He remembered, with sick dread, how many people disappear yearly in a mysterious fashion, never to be heard of or seen again.

"I will go to the station," he said, "and see what I can learn there," and he at once acted on this idea.

But, alas! his questions elicited nothing but the fact that Mr. and Miss Lynn had left the previous night for Liverpool-street; and a fear struck him that even her letter had been written under coercion, only Veronica was not exactly the sort of girl to be coerced.

To Liverpool-street he went, and there he lost all trace of father and daughter, and after lingering in London three days he returned to find Mr. Lynn had reached home on Tuesday without Veronica.

Then he went to the Hall and demanded an audience with his enemy. A stormy scene ensued in which he accused Lynn of spiriting his daughter away, and demanded to know where he had hidden her.

Lynn, secure in his position, laughed at and openly defied him; twisted him with his presumption in lifting his eyes to Veronica, and concluded by swearing the girl had seen the folly of their unsanctioned engagement, and had chosen this way to end it.

"You are a liar!" cried Ralph, passionately. "You are a fool, too, to suppose that I would believe any statement of yours!"

"Am I to be insulted in my own house by a beggarly adventurer?" retorted Lynn, in a paroxysm of rage. "Go while you may, or I swear I will have you put out of the place."

Ralph interrupted him with a short, sarcastic laugh.

"Keep your threats for cowards like yourself," he said. "You don't suppose your brutality is a secret in the village. There is not a man or woman in the place who does not know who inflicted the bruise your daughter yet bears upon her face. I warn you I will never rest until I have found her, and induced her to share my lot, and my stainless name!" and then he went out, meeting Mrs. Lynn in the wide hall.

He would have passed her with a mere bow, but she stayed him with a quick, nervous gesture.

"Mr. Hastings, you will not try to find or molest my daughter. It is far better you and she should never meet again. Her father would never permit her to become your wife!"

"When I have found her, madam, we shall not trouble to ask his consent," he answered, coldly, and left her standing there.

CHAPTER VII.

The summer days were gone; the "light of the lily burned close to the mould," and yet

in all his wanderings to and fro Ralph had learned no tidings of Veronica. At the close of October he returned to Hemel Feris to learn that the Lynns had gone abroad, but no one could give any idea of their whereabouts, and what troubled him most of all was that Lord Mansel had gone with them.

Not that he doubted Veronica's love or steadfastness, but he dreaded the persecutions she might be called upon to bear.

"I wish I had been at home," he said, "I would have followed them until I found her; for something tells me they are going to join her."

And then his funds being all but exhausted, he compelled himself to work long hours at his easel, and when the picture was completed it was declared his masterpiece, because into it he had painted all the passion and pain of all his life.

Meanwhile, Veronica and Miss Watkyns had joined the Lynn party at Versailles; the girl was changed and aged since last her parents saw her. The solitary life at Fantilaire, the lack of congenial society, and of occupation had told terribly upon her; and then, too, she had brooded much over her loss and Ralph's possible anger.

Her eyes were dark with her unwept woe, her face was worn, and the beautiful mouth had a mournful curve.

Mansel was startled when he saw her. This was not the sort of wife he would choose. He should grow to hate that highbred, melancholy face if it confronted him day after day at every turn; and he almost said so much to Lynn.

The ex-lawyer turned upon him with a sneer. "I haven't the slightest doubt that you prefer the dairy-maid style of comeliness; pray do not consider yourself in any way bound to Miss Lynn. I have already received proposals for her hand from the Marquis D'Arvenac. The alliance would be more suitable in every way; and after the expression of your sentiments, I think it well we should part."

So to her intense relief Veronica found herself rid of her unwelcome suitor. The Marquis came and went, but he was a gentleman by nature, and in no way rendered himself offensive. He rode and walked daily with her, never addressing her in the language of love, but taking it quite for granted that eventually she would accept his name together with his elderly heart.

So the days wore by and November came—and if Veronica was pining for news of home and lover, she gave no sign.

"Veronica, don't you think it high time your father returned, it is growing quite dark, and he promised to be home by three."

"He will come presently; something has delayed him," said the girl rising and walking to a window. "Ah! even now he is coming up the road. No; it is the Marquis. Mother, I am not equal to entertaining him to-day;" and she made as though she would escape, but Mrs. Lynn prevented her.

"You know, Veronica, how ill at ease I always am with him; his manner is so haughty. You must stay."

"Very well," and still standing, she waited for the Marquis to be announced. When she saw his face she knew something tragic had occurred.

"Mrs. Lynn—Miss Veronica—I pray you to be calm; Mr. Lynn has met with an accident. We hope it is not serious. He was thrown from his horse, and they are bringing him home. Madame, I implore you to be calm," as the wife broke out into wild screams and wallings; "remember so much depends upon you."

"Mother!" said Veronica quietly; "go to your room, Rosine and Babette will attend you. Father will need my services."

Shrieking and crying still, she was conveyed to her own apartments; and then the daughter waited in absolute silence for her father's coming.

Inexperienced in such matters as she was, she knew when her eyes rested upon his face that but few hours were allotted to him, and for the first time in her life her heart grew tender towards him.

Gently she ministered to his needs, obeying all the doctor's directions implicitly and intelligently; and when they were alone once more, she knelt by his side.

"Dear father, is there nothing I can do for you?" she asked, and kissed his clay-cold brow.

"Bring your mother; before the morning comes I shall be gone. I want her now!"

So Mrs. Lynn was brought in weeping, but the presence of death restrained her, and she only sobbed under her breath as she took the poor wounded head upon her breast.

"Oh Elias! oh Elias! what shall I do without you? Never did a woman have a better husband than you have been to me from the day you first called me wife till now!"

"Thank you, Maria! perhaps in all the world you are the only one who will regret when I am gone. Your future is safe, dear—I can trust you with our daughter!" Then later, as the slow chill dawn began to break, he turned upon his pillows. "Veronica, are you there?"

"Father, yes;" and she took his cold hand gently in her own.

"I am sorry for my sin, child, be as happy as you will. If he can forgive, it will be an easy way to right my wrong," and those were his last words.

A little later he died. The news of his death was conveyed to Hemel Feris, but no one knew where his widow and child resided. Six months later his wife followed him, and it was rumoured the heiress was on her way to England.

One evening later in May, Freke heard a knock at the front door, and opening it, saw a lady draped in heavy mourning and thickly veiled. Instinct told her who it was even before the sweet, sad voice said,—

"Let me in, dear Freke, I must see your master."

"Oh, miss! Oh, my dear, dear miss, you have come at last! Go in; you know where to find him," and she pointed to the studio door.

Without a word, and trembling in every limb, Veronica went forward, turned the handle and entered.

"Ralph!"

And at that one word, he started to his feet, looked into the worn, lovely face, now unveiled, and springing to her side, would have taken her into his embrace, but she waved him back a moment.

"Wait," she said, in a low and broken voice. "Leave me my strength and courage. I so sorely need them. Let me say what I have to say, and then pass out for ever from your honourable life. For years I was ignorant of my father's sin, he died repenting it; when you taught me to love you, I still was ignorant, and the truth, when I learned it, almost killed me. By his will I was left, at my mother's death, sole heiress to his estate. I came as soon as I could to make restitution. Here, Ralph, dear Ralph! I give back all that never was mine by right, all that it would madden me to retain. Think of me, sometimes, kindly as a woman not wholly unhappy, not wholly unblest, because she has found work to do. Good-bye."

"No!" he cried, and caught her hands. "No, Veronica; keep all save yourself. These dear hands, that dear heart, are the only riches I crave. Stay with me, dear!"

She fell on her knees before him, the tears streaming down her pallid cheeks.

"Be merciful. You forget whose child I am—forget me; marry some woman whose name is clean, whose forebears are honourable. Not me! oh, not me! and Heaven bless you in the home to which you have so long been an alien."

"Veronica," he said, solemnly, "I will

never enter it without my wife; only from my wife's hands can I receive these great gifts. You are a wealthy woman, I a poor man, but I don't care one atom what the world says of me, how often it calls me adventurer and fortune hunter. I am willing to be, as it were, a pensioner on your bounty, if the hand that proffers the gift is mine also."

"Do you mean this?" she questioned, breathlessly.

He had raised her, and drawn her to his side.

"I love you," he answered, gravely. "You alone can make my life glad. Will you give yourself to me?"

Her arms stole about his neck, her head dropped on his breast. A little happy sob broke from her grateful heart.

"My love has always been yours," she whispered, "and with that, all that's mine is thine, ladzie." Oh, love, love! be kind to me always. In all the world I have but you!

The world wondered a great deal over their marriage, but they cared less than nothing, being blest in their mutual love. So Ralph came back to his own; but he did not cease to labour at his canal or with his pen. And as years went by, fame came to him, and Veronica's lovely face wore a look of proud content; so that women envied her, and men praised her beauty and gracious ways.

But if she knew these things she scarcely regarded them, so blest was she in the love of husband and children. And Ralph Hastings—well, there are times, when looking on her beauty, thinking of all she suffered and sacrificed for him, strong man as he is, tears of passionate love and gratitude rise to his eyes, and his very soul is humbled within him, because, justly or unjustly, he scarcely believes himself worthy to call her wife.

And Dame Freke? Well, should you chance in your rambles to rest at Hemel Ferie, be sure you visit the Hall, and there you will see a gaunt, angular old lady, dressed in rustling black silk, who will give you a full and particular account of the Hastings family.

She is a dame of great importance, which fact she impresses upon you by frequent jingling of her keys, and references to her manifold responsibilities. This is Dame Freke, housekeeper and friend, trusty servant and faithful follower.

[THE END]

FACTETLE.

NEVER stir another man's tar pot. Let him do his own dirty work.

A MAN who sticks up for his master—a bill-poster.

A CROSS old bachelor suggests that births should be announced under the head of new music.

THREE things that ought never to be from home—the cat, the chimney, and the housewife.

THREE things that never become rusty—the money of the benevolent, the shoes of the butcher's horse, and a woman's tongue.

THERE is one lucky thing about spoiled children—we never have them in our own family.

SOME folks say their work is laid out beforehand. A physician's work is often laid out after he has finished it.

ONE can always tell by the way a woman walks whether she wears shoes of a size suitable to her feet.

WHEN making a speech, my son, follow the example of the best needle manufacturers and sink the I.

DURING the winter the hen may be distasteful, but she generally comes to the scratch when the garden is planted.

"A MAN'S funny-bone," said a little boy in an examination, "is what makes him laugh in his sleeve."

"PA," said little Harry, "what is a soldier of fortune?" "A soldier of fortune, my son, is a soldier that never has any fortune at all."

A SOMEWHAT ambiguous advertisement in a recent issue of a daily paper announces that "a second-hand girl's side-saddle is for sale."

LADY (in new grocery store): "Have you any ten-year-old port wine?" BOY: "No, mum, this grocery store was only started last week."

MAUD (at day school): "Oh, George, I do so love a big dog." GEORGE: "I wish I was a big dog." MAUD: "Don't worry, you'll grow."

WE have no objection to a man who rides a hobby—not even if he rides it to death. We only protest when he takes up the whole road with it.

"So you were a soldier? Did you go clear through the rebellion?" "No, I married during the war, and have not got through the rebellion yet."

LITTLE DOT: "Papa, I must have a new dress to play in." PAPA: "What is the matter with that one?" LITTLE DOT: "It's all worn out 'cept the buttonholes."

THE young man who persuades himself that two people can live as cheaply as one can always find a girl to help him to try the experiment.

EVEN if a boy is always whistling "I want to be an angel," it is just as well to keep the preserved pears on the top shelf of the pantry.

GOODMAN: "Our new minister is troubled with insomnia." CYNICUS: "He should swallow one of his own sermons each night before retiring."

FIGGS: "You have an independent income, haven't you?" DIGGS: "Independent? Well, I should say I had. It has utterly ignored me for years!"

HE stood under the window and sang, "How can I leave thee?" But he did leave, and so suddenly that the dog went back to the house and wept.

WAITER (at the village club): "There's a lady outside who says that her husband promised to be home early tonight." ALL (singing): "Excuse me a moment."

"I FEEL it just as much, my dear little boy," said papa, after he had spanked Billykins. "Yes," sobbed Billykins. "But n-not in the same place."

WHEN a girl has a handsome new solitaire diamond engagement ring, the thought involuntarily comes to her mind, how foolish it is for women to wear gloves so much!

HUSBAND: "No blue-socking for me? An ignorant woman makes a far better wife." WIFE: "Am I a good wife, John?" HUSBAND: "Yes, you are an ideal one."

YOUNG LADY (to gentleman): "No, I should never suit you; I want my own way in everything." HE (magnificently): "Well, and you could go on wanting it when we were married."

THEY sat together on the front piazza on a midsummer day. "Do you know that this is the longest day in the year?" he said. "I believe you," she answered, yawning.

HIS REVERENCE: "What, off to work at last, Tim?" TIM MURPHY: "Yes, y' riverence. Y' know, O'm a haymaker by trade, an' I always work one week in the year."

MIDDLE-AGED SPRINTER (as tramp comes into the yard): "What do you want here, anything to eat?" TRAMP: "What else should I want, madame? Did you think I came to offer a proposal of marriage?"

MISTRESS: "Bridget, we will have cotelettes for breakfast to-morrow morning." BRIDGET: "The servants don't like cotelettes, marm." MISTRESS: "But I like cotelettes." BRIDGET: "It's hardly worth while to get them for one."

ALWAYS keep your brains as well as your hands busy. Bats get into an empty garret.

"UNDERSTAND your mother-in-law helps your wife, old fellow, a great deal?" "Oh! lots; gave her a set of old buttons yesterday, and she rushed me for the money this morning to buy a dress to match them."

"ISN'T this your prayer-book, Miss Chaser?" "Why, yes; thank you, it is. How did you know it, Mr. Blunt?" "When I took it up, it opened at the marriage service."

"HIGGLEDY doesn't seem to care so much for his wife as he did when she was Miss Brown." "No, they are one now. And Higgledy isn't the man to be guilty of inordinate self-love."

INDIGNANT BICYCLIST: "Madam, your dog snaps at me every time I pass. Here he comes now." (Starts off.) OLD LADY: "Spot, Spot, you foolish dog. Come here. Them ain't bones. Them's legs."

"I EXPECT to die young. All my ancestors were exceptionally short lived," says Mr. Talkington. "Indeed!" says Miss Pryn. "Yes, my grandfather died in infancy, and—" Miss Pryn: "Oh!"

CONTRIBUTOR: "Here is a manuscript I wish to submit." EDITOR (rushing his hand): "I'm sorry; we are all full just now." CONTRIBUTOR (blanely): "Very well, I will call again when some of you are sober."

BRIDE (just after the wedding): "Alfred, you promised to give me a grand surprise after we were married. What is it?" BRIDE-GROOM (a widower): "I've got six children, my pet."

THE meanest man so far on record lives in the Isle of Man. His wife asked him to give her a pet, some animal that would stick to her, and the next evening he brought home a leech.

DEACON SKINNEK: "My dear friend, I grieve to find you so worldly-minded. Why don't you come to church with me?" MR. PAYWELL: "Because it worries me to see a half-starved minister."

A SMART bit of repartee was overheard the other day at Killarney. A guide with a tourist scowled at a peasant who stared well at him. "You'll know me again if you meet me," said the guide. "Not if yer wash yer face," said the peasant.

THOMAS: "I don't like to boast, don't chinknow, but I'll have you to know that I am always present at all the society events. What d'yer think o' that?" HENRY: "I think you must be a waiter. Can't account for it in any other way."

"AND what," asked the young woman who is sometimes facetious, "is the rank of the individual who brings up the rear with a bucket and a tin cup?" "O," replied the member of the militia, without hesitation, "he's a lemon-ade de camp."

A CERTAIN official was bothered almost to death by people running in on him at all times of the day, and he was expressing himself emphatically on the subject. "Why don't you put a time lock on your door, so they can get in only at a stated hour?" suggested a friend. "Time lock, nothing," he exclaimed; "what I want is an eternity lock."

YOUNG FATHER: "I am amazed, shocked, my dear, to hear you say you intend to give the baby some paregoric. Don't you know paregoric is opium, and opium stunts the growth, enfeebls the constitution, weakens the brain, destroys the nerves, and produces rickets, marasmus, consumption, insanity, and death?" YOUNG MOTHER: "Horror! I never heard a word about that. I won't give the little duckie darling a drop, no, indeed. But something must be done to stop his yelling. You carry him a while." FATHER (after an hour's steady stamping with the squalling infant): "Where is thunder is that paregoric?"

SOCIETY.

THE Empress Frederick has opened a small hospital at Cronburg, in the Taunus, which is to be maintained entirely at her expense.

A MOVEMENT is on foot for a great International Exhibition at Berlin in 1894. The arrival of the Emperor will soon settle the important question, "to be or not to be."

It is not generally known that an old silk hat can be washed and done up so as to appear perfectly new, but it is a fact.

THE Elcho Shield having been won, for the first time for some years past, by the English Eight, it will be formally handed over to the custody of the Lord Mayor, and restored to its old place in the Guildhall, some time in October.

THE Prince of Wales is at Hornburg, and H.R.H. will not return to England until quite the end of September. The Princess is to stay in Denmark for six or seven weeks. They will not visit Abergeldie Castle this year, but are to be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Fife at Braemar when they go to Scotland.

THE magnificent diamond tiara and necklace which the Duchess of Aosta wore when she appeared in full dress on her recent visit to England are the famous jewels which the Emperor Napoleon gave to Princess Clotilde on her marriage, and they are worth a good fortune.

THE fashionable young man now writes with a quill pen, the feather parts of which bear panicles, violets, or lilies painted thereupon. The effects are charming. Sometimes the whole pen, feathers and all, is dyed a delicate pink or blue or green.

THE German Emperor has asked permission of the King of Sweden to erect a monument at the North Cape, in commemoration of his voyage in those regions, and to encourage navigators to the North. The figure of the Emperor is represented with the right arm pointing the route to voyagers.

THE Crown Prince of Portugal, a weakly child of four, is suffering greatly from the abnormal dampness of the Pena Palace at Cintra, and his recovery is very doubtful. His father who has increased in weight to an alarming extent since his accession, is advised very strongly by his physicians to make a cure at Carlsbad, but the political and financial complications of Portugal render it impossible for him to quit the kingdom.

THE young King Alexander of Serbia is said to have come off very well with his examinations in religion, geometry, algebra, physics, chemistry, the science of arms, tactics, history, the German, French, English and Latin languages, and the masters expressed themselves quite satisfied with their pupil. After having studied so hard for eight months it may be imagined with what joy he now has his holidays.

DURING the warm weather, when the use of powder is considered almost necessary, great care should be taken to obtain the best. Every woman who wishes to be sure that there is nothing injurious in her toilet powder can satisfy herself by submitting it to the following test:—Place a teaspoonful of the powder in a glass and add the juice of a lemon. If effervescence takes place, it is an infallible proof that the powder is dangerous and that its use should be avoided, as it will injure the skin and destroy the beauty of the complexion.

IN Strassburg, Germany, since 1884, girls have been taught to mend the clothes of their families at the public expense. Materials are furnished by the city when necessary. The instruction is given by teachers of the elementary schools on the weekly holiday. The number of pupils is increased from twenty to about one thousand, and the annual expense is about £156. In one year nine thousand garments were mended by six hundred girls.

STATISTICS.

IN all their wars, the British have won the splendid average of 82 per cent. of the battles.

THE average weight of an Englishman is 150 pounds; of a Frenchman 136 pounds; a German, 146 pounds.

THE average of the pulse in infancy is 120 beats per minute; in manhood, 80; at 60 years, 60. The pulse of females is more frequent than that of males.

THE vine ceases to grow at 2,800 feet above the level of the sea, Indian corn at 2,800 feet, oak at 3,350 feet, walnut at 3,600 feet, ash at 4,800 feet, yellow pine at 6,200 feet, and fir at 6,700 feet.

THE forests of "Darkest Africa" strike the imagination, but they are not the greatest on the earth. In the Empire of Russia there are 494,228,000 acres of forest; in Africa according to calculation, there are only 224,000,000 acres.

GEMS.

DO not unto yourself that which thou wouldst not have others do unto thee.

GOOD laws are of little avail when bad men are depended upon to enforce them.

STAND up for what you believe until you are honestly convinced of your error.

EVERY woman is a daughter, sister, wife, or mother. Let a man treat a woman as he would have other men treat his daughter, sister, wife, or mother. Every man is a son, brother, husband, or father. Let a woman act towards a man as she would desire other women to act towards her son, brother, husband, or father.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GRAHAM WATERS.—In one half-pound of flour put a little salt and sugar, stir in one half-pint of sweet cream, mix well and quickly, roll out very thin, cut in squares, prick with a fork, and bake in a very hot oven a few minutes.

GREENGAGE JAM.—Four pounds greengages, four pounds crystallized sugar. Take the stones nicely from the greengages and put the stones into a nice little saucepan, with two breakfastcups of water, to boil for half-an-hour gently. Strain this and put the liquid into the jelly pan, add the sugar, and stir till it all boils; then put in the greengages and boil gently for half-an-hour. Skim and put it in pots. If taking the stones from the fruit is too much trouble, put one breakfastcup of water and the sugar into the pan to boil, then add the plums picked and washed and boil half-an-hour and pot.

PICKLED CUCUMBER.—Two cucumbers, one breakfastcupful vinegar, one teaspoonful of peppercorns, salt, mustard, nutmeg. Small cucumbers should be pickled whole, but the ordinary kind should be cut in rather thick slices and the seeds picked out; put them into a strong brine of salt and water for a day, then drain and dry them thoroughly and put them in a jar. Boil a large breakfastcupful of vinegar (if you have two cucumbers), and pour it over them in a jar, cover over at once with thick paper or a plate, and set the jar near the fire. Next day pour off all the vinegar, boil it again and pour it over the cucumbers; cover again quite close to keep the steam in. Do this again the next day. This makes the pickle daily become a greener colour. Boil the vinegar the fourth time with a teaspoonful of peppercorns, a little mustard, a little nutmeg, and half a teaspoonful of salt, pour it all over the cucumbers, and cork or cover tightly.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A WATERPROOF paper has lately been invented that will even standing boiling.

FROGS, toads, and serpents never take food but that which they are satisfied is alive.

THERE are more than twenty times as many Germans in England as there are Englishmen in Germany.

THE Hindoos are said to have no word for "friend." The Italians have no equivalent for "humility."

FROM the sun our earth would appear as a bright star, and from the nearest fixed star it would be invisible.

THE printing press is the real civilizer, and has done more than any organization to better the condition of man.

THE very common notion that getting wet through with sea-water doesn't induce cold is simply nonsense. A cold caught through getting wet from the sea is just as lasting as any other, and often a very trying one to get rid of.

THERE are two restaurants in the Soho district, at both of which snails are kept all ready for the customers as a regular thing, the usual price being about two shillings a dozen—for they are rather a delicacy. They are just now coming into full season.

THE largest congregation that ever assembled to hear the words of a preacher, was the concourse of 23,000 persons to whom the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon preached at the Crystal Palace, on October 7th, 1857, the day appointed as a fast at the time of the Indian Mutiny.

IRON expands with heat. So if railway rails were laid to exactly meet one another, a piping hot summer day would result in the destruction of the track. It is 400 miles from London to Edinburgh, and on the average the railway lines that lie between the two places are 340 yards longer in summer than in winter.

A SCIENTIST who has been investigating the subject claims that a man drowns on account of the weight of the blood in his body. Blood being heavier than water, it always sinks, and therefore the weight of the blood in a human body is so great as to sink any one who falls into the water and is unable to swim.

IN the production of common watch glasses the glass is blown into a sphere about a metre in diameter, sufficient metal being taken to give the desired thickness, as the case may be. Discs are then cut out from this sphere with the aid of a pair of compasses having a diamond at the extremity of one leg. There is a knack in detaching the disc after it has been cut. A good workman will, it is said, cut 6,000 glasses in a day.

THE Zaparos, a tribe of South America, have a curious way of courting. The love-stricken young man goes out hunting, and, on his return, throws his game at the feet of the young lady who has smitten him together with a sufficient quantity of fuel to cook it. If she takes up the game, lights a fire, and commences to cook it, he knows his suit is accepted, but, if not, he turns away, a sadder if not a wiser man.

A MODEL of the first writing machine made in America still stands. "It was patented in 1843 by one Charles Thurber, of Massachusetts, and is a funny thing in its clumsiness. It has a wheel a foot in diameter, which turns horizontally upon a central pivot; the rim of the wheel is bored with 25 holes, in each one of which is a rod bearing at the top a letter of glass and at the bottom a similar letter of steel. The paper is so arranged that the line to be printed is under the rim of this wheel and the letter wanted is swung into position by turning the wheel; when there, a rod bearing it is depressed until the steel type or letter touches the paper. The fastest operator could not write more than half as fast as a man with a pen.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

DICKY.—We do not understand your question.

B. A. D.—Convicted December 20, 1861, at Stafford Assizes.

MOPE.—The Earl of Zetland is Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

MAURICE.—The owner is entitled to reclaim his stolen property without payment.

FRIAR TUCK.—Apply to the Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, S.W.

JACQUES.—M. Edil Carnot was elected President of the French Republic on December 4, 1877.

THE BARY.—The "I O U" is valid evidence of the indebtedness at the dates given.

IGNORAMUS.—"Percentage" means the amount charged as commission or interest "by the hundred."

JEAN.—No engagement made by a minor is binding, not even a marriage engagement.

DADDY.—The landlord can only follow and distrain in the case of clandestine removal.

SLOPPT.—A jobbing jeweller who uses gold-plate in the way of trade must take out a license.

LEO.—He can, of course, take out a summons, and you had then better state your case to the judge.

ALMA.—Madame Patti was married to Signor Nicolini at Swansea, before the French Consul, on June 9, 1868.

NATALIE.—A person under the age of twenty-one years is not capable of making a valid will.

ESTHER.—The original Hebrew name of Esther, the Persian Queen, wife of Ahasuerus, was Hadassah.

JACK.—We do not know what you mean by asking if football is "a lawful game."

EVA.—If they resided in the parish for the regulation time it would be valid.

APPRENTICE.—You cannot "force" your master to give you a day's holiday.

MERRY.—If any receipt is given for £5, or upwards the law requires a penny receipt stamp to be affixed.

JESS.—The smallest city in England and Wales is St. Davids, in Pembrokeshire, with 2,055 inhabitants.

AUNTIE.—You had better ask at the Inland Revenue Department, Somerset House.

TOM.—The death sentence on Mrs. Maybrick was reduced to one of penal servitude for life.

LADDIE.—New Street Station, Birmingham, is believed to be the largest railway station in the world.

ABRACHAS.—The Prince and Princess of Wales visited Birmingham, November 15, 1874.

VENUS.—The landlord can distrain for whatever rent is due.

FRIENDLINESS.—1. Only if she is in receipt of parish relief. 2. It would depend entirely upon the guardians.

KENNETH.—He must sue you in the ordinary course and obtain judgment before he can proceed to seizure.

ALTHEA.—They are quite worthless for any purpose whatever.

JULIA.—Charles Peace was executed at Leeds on February 25, 1873.

PLAINTIFF.—The question of costs is one for the judge. If he makes no order to the contrary, the defendant pays the plaintiff's costs.

O. P.—The carrier-pigeon has certainly flown long distances at rates of speed ranging from sixty up to eighty miles an hour, and for many hours together.

FAN.—The folding fan was first used in Italy, and was introduced into France by Catherine de Medici, when the fashion was soon adopted by English ladies.

CHAMPAGNE.—Champagne got its name from the old province of Champagne, France, where it was first made.

FAIR LILLIAN.—English will do as much for you as French in Rotterdam. You will find you can make yourself understood.

BIRMINGHAM.—Birmingham is entirely in the county of Warwick. It is at the same time a city of a county in itself.

LESLIE.—There are some two boats a week arriving at Liverpool from Montreal. Passengers land on Sundays.

SCOUTER.—Forth Bridge stands 361 feet above high-water level (as high as St. Paul's Cathedral), and is thus over 500 feet from its foundation.

DECEIVED.—You are not answerable for debts contracted by your wife before her marriage, unless you benefited by her property.

DOLLY.—The copy would have no commercial value. One of your public libraries or museums might accept it as a curiosity.

BROKEN-HEARTED FLO.—Presents given in contemplation of marriage may be recovered if the engagement is broken off, but not letters.

JOE THE MARINE.—1. Two-years' service as an O.B. or ordinary will make you an able-bodied seaman. 2. The seamen engage the men at the Mercantile Marine Office in the town.

DARCY.—The buying-off charge is £10 in three first months after enlisting, and £15 with commanding officer's sanction after that.

BALLY.—The name is pronounced as spelt; though, in ordinary conversation, the "Saint" is often slurred over as though part of "Leger."

LENWARD.—A person riding across your fields without leave would be a trespasser. As to your remedy against him you must ask a lawyer.

BROWDERP.—The 98th Regiment of Foot, now the 2nd Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment, was formerly one of the Prince of Wales's regiments.

F. T.—We do not quite understand your meaning. Brewing licences are granted by the Inland Revenue Department both in town and country.

MARCUS.—The police cannot legally enter a private house in which they suspect habitual gambling to be carried on, without a magistrate's warrant.

MOURNER.—The wearing of checked or striped stuffs, while not considered as an indication of deep mourning, is allowable under certain circumstances.

A WARRIOR BOLD.—Both battalions of the Royal Scots were in the Crimea, the first being with the invading force in September, 1854, the second arriving in April, 1855.

WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN.

When the sun goes down,
And across the fading sea,
Like the crooning of a mother
Comes the murmur of the sea;
The golden clouds of sunset
Change to sober, restful brown,
And soft Peace unfurls her mantle
When the sun goes down.

When the sun goes down,
And from out the glowing west
The evening breeze comes sighing,
Like a whisper from the blast,
Come the little ones, awestruck,
Clinging to their mother's gown,
And they nestle in her bosom
When the sun goes down.

"When the sun goes down!"
Cries the toiler o'er the sea,
"Sweet thoughts, by labour banished,
Will come trooping back to me;
And the smiles of those who love me
Take the place of duty's frown,
For in dreams I shall be with them
When the sun goes down."

When the sun goes down
The life of life recedes;
Hushed is the voice of evil,
And the selfish cry of greed;
Then happy, homeward footings
Echo through the quiet town,
And rest comes to the weary
When the sun goes down.

When the sun goes down
On this busy life for aye,
Perhaps the night that follows
Will be better than the day.
Oh, may its rising shadows
Find us ready for a crown
And the rest that surely cometh
When the sun goes down.

ENGINEER.—The idea of a steam engine was conceived long before the birth of James Watt, as you say, but he produced the modern steam engine, the first complete and reliable article.

RED HERRING.—The regimental pay of a private in the Royal Engineers is 1s. 1½d. per day, but this, of course, does not include his extra pay for work he may do.

FLORA.—A little carbonate of soda put into a vase containing freshly-cut flowers will help to preserve them for a week or ten days. Saltpetre can also be used for the same purpose.

B. A. T.—When an alien (or foreigner) has resided in the United Kingdom for five years he can make application to the Home Secretary, or other Secretary of State, for naturalisation papers.

SUFFERER.—To cure a soft corn, dip a linen rag in turpentine and wrap the rag around the toe on which the corn is situated, night and morning. The corn will usually disappear in a few days.

GODMOTHER.—For christening gifts silver is the usual offering. In lieu of the candle sop, which once was the invariable present from the god-parent, fashion has decreed the presentation of silver spoons.

GARDENER.—A simple method of removing worms from flower pots. Water the earth with water mixed with soap; upon tapping the flower pot with a piece of wood the worms will then come to the surface, whence they can be easily taken.

TURKISH.—The common neglect of the duty of opening and cleansing beds can hardly fail to be productive of disease. We might do worse in this regard than follow the practice on the continent, where the bed-cleanser, with his two storks for bearing the contents of beds and mattresses, after exposing them to sun and air, is a regular spring visitor in all well-regulated households.

MAR.—The public executioner as a rule receives £10 every time he exercises his function, and in the case of a reprieve he is given £5, provided that he has been retained.

PARTY HOUSEWIFE.—Light gloves are clearly out of place for morning wear, and the only use they can be put when old age overtakes them is to transform them, by means of the dyer's art, into darker gloves for common wear.

CITIES OF THE WORLD.—Italian notes are of all sizes, shapes and colours. The smaller bills—five and ten lire notes—are printed on white paper in pink, blue and carmine inks, and ornamented with a finely-engraved vignette of King Humbert.

OUTRIOUS.—The origin of "windfall" in the sense of "good luck," dates from the time of William the Conqueror. It was then a criminal offence to cut timber in the forests. Only such could be gathered as the wind had blown down; hence a heavy windstorm was hailed by the peasants as so much good luck, and from this comes the modern application of the expression.

CARLO.—The militia is the oldest military organisation in the country, and dates from the time of King Alfred, who is said to have called all his male subjects to arms to resist the Danes; and militia forces have been embodied from time to time ever since for special services, and then disbanded. Our standing army, on the other hand, dates only from the time of Charles I. Many statutes have been passed regulating the militia, and different regiments were constituted at different times.

LILLIAN.—Eurydice, in Greek mythology, was the wife of Orpheus. She died from the bite of a serpent, and her husband followed her into the regions below, where Pluto, charmed by the lyre of Orpheus, gave him permission to take her back to earth, on condition that he would not look behind him while ascending; but overcome by love or doubt he glanced back to her as they were about to pass the bounds of Hades, and saw her disappearing.

JANET.—1. Lochinvar, pronounced as if spelled loch-in-var, the accent on the last syllable, is a lake of Scotland, the circuit of which is three miles. The castle of the Gordons, Knights of Lochinvar, was built on an island in the lake. 2. Loch Lomond, the largest lake in Scotland, is pronounced as if spelled loch-lo-mond, the accent on the second syllable. 3. Ben Lomond is a mountain of Scotland, and is pronounced ben-lo-mond, the accent on the second syllable.

GOING OUT.—If you must emigrate, then Queensland is probably the best of the Australian colonies; but we have not much to say in favour of emigration to the colonies just now. Some are still agitated by labour struggles, brought about by an attempt to reduce wages; and in others the struggle has just ended in the discomfiture of the workmen. Write to Agent-General for Queensland, 1, Westminster-chambers, Victoria-street, London, S.W., in reference to assisted passage.

MEO.—Troops are seldom allowed to march over bridges in regular step. In general, when coming to a bridge, particularly a suspension bridge, the drums or bands are stopped, the array is broken, and the soldiers pass over without keeping step, or rather, taking pains not to keep step. The reason is found in the fact that a very slight initial vibration, if continued, is imparted to the whole structure, and in a short time becomes a strong downward strain at every recurrence, as speedily to endanger the safety of the strongest bridge.

A FLOWER LOVER.—The process is one of natural severing of the attachment between the leaf-stalk and the twig. Its cause is the pushing forward of a new leaf-bud underneath the point of attachment. Leaves spring upon trees only at definite points. Each successive act is placed precisely as was the preceding; and as for some reason nature has ordained that trees shall have an annual suit of new leaves, just as animals have an annual suit of new fur, so the old leaves fall with the new as rapidly as possible. Old leaves fall, therefore, because they are pushed off by the growing buds of the new ones.

ABSTAINER.—Alcohol is obtained by the fermentation of sugar or other saccharine matter; though it is possible to obtain pure alcohol, it is perhaps correct to say there is no such thing known to every-day experience. Proof spirit contains 57.27 per cent of alcohol. When a spirit is said to be above proof it contains a greater percentage of alcohol; thus rectified spirits of wine is 54 to 55 over proof, and requires 54 to 55 per cent of water to be added to bring it down to proof. Common whisky and brandy contain 50 to 51 per cent of alcohol, and are, therefore, about half water and half alcohol.

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From SYMES & Co., Pharmaceutical Chemists, Medical Hall, Simla, January 5, 1880.

DEAR SIR,—We embrace this opportunity of congratulating you upon the wide-spread reputation this justly esteemed medicine Dr. J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne, has earned for itself, not only in Hindostan, but all over the East. As a remedy of general utility, we much question whether a better is imported into the country, and we shall be glad to hear of its finding a place in every Anglo-Indian home. We could multiply instances ad infinitum of the extraordinary efficacy of Dr. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne in Diarrhoea and Dysentery, Spasms, Cramps, Neuralgia, the Vomiting of Pregnancy, and as a general sedative, that have occurred under our personal observation during many years. In Choleraic Diarrhoea, and even in the more terrible forms of Cholera itself, we have witnessed its surprisingly controlling power. We have never used any other form of this medicine than Collis Browne's, from a firm conviction that it is decidedly the best, and also from a sense of duty we owe to the profession and the public, as we are of opinion that the substitution of any other than Collis Browne's is a deliberate breach of faith on the part of the Chemist to prescriber and patient alike.

We are, Sir, faithfully yours, SYMES & Co.

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Lot E. 2.—Challenge Silk Parcel, 35s. 6d., contains—15 yards lovely quality Black Serge Silk (this is a beautiful soft twill made from pure Silk, and has a very rich appearance); 1 pair Ladies' French Kid Gloves, any size, in Colours and Black, and 5 fine quality pure white Irish Linen Hemstitched Pocket Handkerchiefs. The lot sent, carriage paid, for 35s. 6d.; the Silk alone is worth more money.

Lot E. 3.—The Mother's Household Parcel, contains—1 pair of real Witney Blankets, 2½ yards long, extra wide, fleecy goods, 1 pair real Bolton Twill Sheets, nearly 2½ yards long, and extra wide; these are not quite white, but will become so in a few washings; 1 blue and white Alhambra Quilt, nearly three yards long, extra wide, 6 yards of good white Flannel, 6 yards of medium weight White Calico, suitable for ladies' or children's under-wear, 1 pure Barnsley Linen Breakfast Cloth, 2 large Linen Huckaback Towels. The whole lot sent, carriage free, for 35s. 6d. This is one of the cheapest and most useful parcels a mother could buy.

Lot E. 4.—The Stores' Elder Down Quilt and Blanket Parcel.—The goods in this parcel are of the finest quality. 1 best quality Elder Down Quilt, filled with the real Arctic Down, covered with the best French sateen, 6ft. by 5ft., beautiful rich designs; one pair extra quality superfine all-wool real Witney Blankets, 2½ yards long, extra wide; these are honestly worth 22s. 6d. per pair; 1 pair of good quality pure Wigan Twill Sheets, 6 yards to the pair, washed and hemmed ready for use; 6 yards of scarlet or white Government Flannel, suitable for ladies' or gents' wear; 3 extra good and large white Linen Huckaback Towels. The whole contents of this parcel sent, carriage paid, for £37s. 6d.

Lot E. 5.—A cheap Suiting Tweed Parcel, contains—7 yards good dark mixture Winter Suiting Tweed, 2 pairs of gents' Merino Half Hose, full fashioned, 1 dozen gents' white Irish Linen Handkerchiefs. The whole lot sent, carriage paid, for 17s. 6d. The Tweed alone is worth more than the whole amount.

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